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Progressive News, Views and Solution:

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FIGHTBACK**
Free Education
for Everyone

ZAPATISTAS-
17 years of
Rebellion

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**THE END OF
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MOVING BEYOND THE RECESSION

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**MAKING OUR
NATURAL
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speaks out**



DECISION TIME

Northern Ireland's need for an opposition

The centre for progressive economics -
confronting the cutback agenda





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Editorial: Real Change

There are always choices. Currently throughout Ireland the failed elite would like you to believe there are none. Whether it is Stormont parties forcing through Tory cuts that will throw the economy back into recession or southern parties who are only too willing to serve their new IMF masters, they say it is their way or the highway.

As elections come and go it is clear that the choices for the working class are however limited. There is currently no united working class movement capable of remoulding the economy and society to benefit the many rather than the few.

Now is the time for the building of such working class and progressive solidarity. It is becoming clear to all that the policies of economic growth must replace the cutback agenda which aims merely to move the costs of corruption from the culprits to society as a whole.

The ripping down of the staid, uncaring catholic hierarchy's reputation also offers the possibility of ending their grip on many children's education, enabling the development of critical minds.

Workers must not be despondent when a failing capitalist system attempts to condemn them into unemployment; the youth must not accept being cast out of their own country – now is a time to build politically, culturally and intellectually a united movement which can change the balance of power on this island.

Trade unions must build bonds with the radical student movement, left forces must place the achievement of shared goals before competition, and working class communities must unite rather than allow victory to those who would destabilise them; in the media progressive forces must also come together to confront the lies of the establishment.

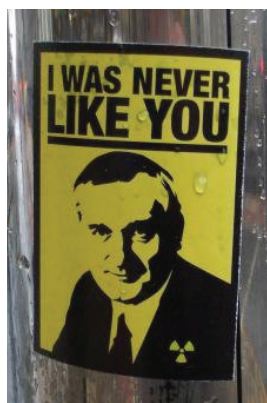
In our places of learning the policies of economic growth must be refined for it is only with their implementation that this current recession will be vanquished and we can move on to building a society free from greed induced crisis.

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The great pension robbery



They sat in a Dail which passed cuts to the blind pension, child allowance, unemployment benefits and public sector pensions but the most disgraceful generation of Irish politicians will continue to enjoy a jet-set lifestyle into their so-called 'retirement.'

Below are what just some of the politicians that have recently 'retired' have received in one off lump sum payments and will continue to receive in annual pensions.

	Lump Sum	Annual Pension
Bertie Ahern (FF)	388,855	155,892
Brian Cowen (FF)	300,000 +	145,000
Mary Harney (ex-PD)	343,087	118,837
Noel Dempsey (FF)	328,469	111,120
Dermot Ahern (FF)	328,469	111,120
Michael Woods (FF)	328,469	111,120
Batt O'Keeffe (FF)	328,469	94,366
Beverley Flynn (FF)	186,219	33,947
Jackie Healy-Rae (Ind)	186,210	33,947
Tom Kitt (FF)	283,429	77,743
MJ Nolan (SF)	229,855	48,492
Rory O'Hanlon (FF)	328,460	111,119
Ned O'Keeffe (FF)	263,429	63,600
Jim O'Keeffe (SF)	263,438	68,639
PJ Sheehan (SF)	229,864	49,345
Olwyn Enright (FG)	129,800	22,542

Post office under threat from Con-Dems

Francis Donohoe

Despite overwhelming support for a publicly owned postal service the Con-Dems seem intent on privatisation of the Royal Mail.

Under plans announced by the now resigned Liberal Business Secretary Vince Cable, the Government is planning to sell off all of its shares in the company.

This privatisation policy flies in the face of public opinion with a summer 2010 YouGov poll indicating only 15 per cent agree with privatising Royal Mail while 60 per cent believe it should remain a wholly publicly-owned organisation.

WP general secretary John Lowy said: "Throughout its history Royal Mail has provided a vital public service to isolated rural and urban communities alike across the North. This will all go under privatisation because the need to turn a profit will undermine the public service ethos."

Under the Con-Dem plans the first shares in Royal Mail would be offered for sale in 2012 and a small stake would be left in the hands of workers to buy their support for privatisation.

Plans for Dublin Institute of Technology shelved.

Padraig Mannion

The Grangegorman site, planned as the new home for a unified campus for the five colleges of the Dublin Institute of Technology is destined to lie derelict for the next ten years.

Workers' Party representative in Dublin central Malachy Steenson stated: "This plan would have provided a massive jobs boost to the area, and an educational focus for some of the most deprived communities in Ireland. Historically the tech sector has always had a much higher working class participation than the universities or teacher training colleges".

However neither the recent details of the government's capital spending programme, or the Hunt Report on the future of third level education make any mention of the Grangegorman project. "Why can the government give \$100 million to some of the most posh private schools in the country but ignore the needs of thousands of students in the DIT? Maybe it is instructive that nobody who sat around the cabinet table, or sits at the top table in the Department of Education has actually come through the DIT or the old VEC system," Steenson added.

Our water- not their profits

Paul Dillon

Moves towards the privatisation of the public water supply are a growing concern on both sides of the border.

This winter in Northern Ireland 40,000 houses were left without any running water for days due to burst pipes, however WP general secretary John Lowry warned that those seeking to use the crisis to promote privatisation were ignoring the real issues. Lowry said: "The lesson that should not be drawn from this fiasco are that water charges are necessary or that privatised services are more efficient. The water service here has been underfunded for decades. More public investment is needed and this should not involve people paying twice (through rates and water charges) for what they already own."

The southern water mains system is in

similar ill-repair with up to 40 per cent of supply lost through leaks. Local authorities estimate that upgrading the 26,000 km mains network would cost €100 million for every one percent but the investment would provide thousands of jobs.

However, rather than focus on upgrading supply the Green Party have pushed for water metering and charges, which is widely seen as paving the way to privatisation. Fingal Labour councillor Patrick Nulty said he was confident that his party would not re-introduce water charges in government. "I will fight charges all the way. Labour abolished the tax when last in government. If we start rowing back on what we have achieved, it will obviously be a bad day for the party".

According to Socialist party councillor Clare Daly: "Half of the state's housing

stock has been built since we succeeded in abolishing this tax in the mid-1990s, yet precious little water conservation measures were put in place in terms of rain water harvesting or dual flush toilets."

"Now they want to introduce meters. This exposes the con, if this was about conservation, they would be investing far more and would be linking it with new building regulations, and all meters do is to measure consumption, they don't alter it." Waterford WP representative Joe Tobin said: "Right across the UK we have seen what has happened when the supply of drinking water was handed over to the private sector. Investment ceased, service rapidly deteriorated, prices soared and the privateers laughed all the way to their offshore banks".



Garland extradition case drags on

Francis Donohoe

The long-running attempt by the US authorities to extradite veteran socialist Sean Garland on allegations of “economic sabotage” will now go to the Supreme Court following a defence appeal for the discovery of documents. Last December, Sean’s lawyers appealed a High Court decision not to disclose the documents relating to the untested US allegations that the 76-year-old conspired in the late 1990s to undermine the US economy by

distributing forged, near-perfect \$100 bills, so-called ‘Big head super dollars’. Due to court backlogs, the Supreme Court case may not be heard for over two years. Sean’s defence team also sought the relaxation of his strenuous bail conditions. All that was granted was that Sean must sign on at the local Garda station only once rather than four times a week.

For more information see www.seangarland.org

Privatisation of refuse services condemned

Peter Mitchell

Moves by local authority officials to privatise refuse collection services have been condemned as the abandoning of an essential public service. Workers’ Party spokesperson Joe Tobin said a proposal by the management in Waterford City Council to privatise that city’s refuse collection service amounted to “an abject admittance of failure.” Tobin said “this proposal represents the greatest surrender by the senior management of Waterford City in its entire history. They propose to hand over a service that affects every family and individual in this city to private profit companies

whose loyalties lie only in the bottom line is an abject admittance of failure.”

He added; “If this City Council cannot even keep the streets of our estates clean exactly what is their purpose and why are they in the well paid positions they now occupy?” Similar moves by South County Dublin Council have resulted in Sitpu workers voting for strike action. Union Organiser, Conor O’Gorman said the action was being taken as a direct result of the unilateral decision by South Dublin County Council to discontinue the collection of waste by direct labour.

It’s the way they tell ‘em.....

“I would have loved if somebody somewhere told me what was going on in the banks in this country, but no-one ever did. We get wise after the event.”
Failed Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, January 2011.

“I don’t know how people who engage in that moaning don’t commit suicide,”
Bertie Ahern, 2007 – his reaction to economists stating the republic faced a bank driven economic collapse.

“I cannot say sorry with any degree of sincerity,”
Former Anglo-Irish bank boss Seanie Fitzpatrick, October 2008.

“I think it’s a fair return for the very long hours that I put in and for the loneliness and pressure of continuing to over-achieve.”
Seanie, again, on his long holidays and millions of euro salary.

“A generation ago, the very idea that a British politician would go to Ireland to see how to run an economy would have been laughable... Today things are different. Ireland stands as a shining example of the art of the possible in long-term economic policymaking, and that is why I am in Dublin: to listen and to learn.”
British chancellor Gideon ‘George’ Osborne, 2006.
*Compiled by Frankie Lally

Battling to save the welfare state

Cian O’Callaghan

The Con-Dem coalition’s cutback agenda is threatening the very survival of the welfare state according to Labour MP John McDonnell. Addressing the January annual general meeting of the Labour Representation Committee in London, McDonnell declared that activists were facing the pivotal political fight of their lives: “for the very survival of the welfare state that arose out of struggle, and which gave working class people protection and opportunity, a chance of a free education and at times full employment, and benefits as a right instead of charity.” McDonnell outlined the attacks on the welfare state, the ending of adequate social housing, the creeping privatisation of the NHS, the commodification of education and

the cutting of benefits and pensions “causing an impoverishment not seen since the 1930s.

Veteran Labour activist Tony Benn told delegates that he could not recall a time when the decisions to be taken by the British Left were so important and what was now at stake was: “defending the right to use our vote to meet our needs.”

He said there were clear alternatives to the strategy of cuts and that this must be made clear to the public.

Others who addressed the conference included Fire Brigade Union general secretary Matt Wrack, who emphasised the need for one unified anti-cuts campaign rather than a number of small and disparate, competing groups.

The FBU leader said the reason Monty Python’s People’s Front of Judea versus the Judean People’s Front is funny is because it is true!

The conference’s main debate focused on whether or not to work within the Labour Party for change. There was significant opposition to working within Labour from some union delegates, particularly in the RMT. However, a majority of delegates agreed to retain rebuilding the party as a central aim.

In his closing address, McDonnell reminded the conference that “the most important thing is not whether or not you are in the Labour Party, but whether or not you are in the struggle”, adding, “all of us are leaders, all of us must take a lead.”



Election 2011- WP Candidates



Michael Finnegan, Dublin West

Michael is a long-time trade unionist and is President of The Workers' Party. Living in Lucan, Michael and his wife, Anne, have been community activists for many years. He prioritises the provision of proper facilities to cater for Dublin West's growing population. Michael has long campaigned against the introduction of service charges.



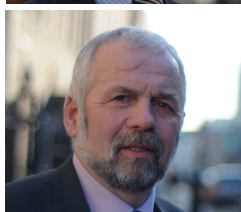
John Dunne, Dublin North West

John has been a leading community activist for many years and is the chair of the Ballymun Jobs Forum. He believes the new Ballymun shopping centre must be built without delay and has published detailed proposals for a state-funded regeneration of Finglas Village. He opposes the handing over of public facilities, such as swimming pools, to private companies.



Malachy Steenson, Dublin Central

Malachy was born and reared in Dublin Central and continues to work in the inner-city as a solicitor. A Socialist-Republican, he believes that opportunities in life should be available to all and not just the privileged few. Malachy has campaigned for effective community and the re-introduction of full-time resident care-takers in flat complexes.



Seamus McDonagh, Meath East

Seamus believes in a Health Service free to all at the point of delivery and has campaigned strongly in defence of Navan Hospital. Seamus believes that the thousands of families in a mortgage black hole must not be victimised to pay for the bank bailout, their loans must be renegotiated at current values. Seamus believes in state investment in social infrastructure.



Joe Tobin, Waterford

Joe will fight for the creation of local jobs - there are now 14,875 people on the live register in Waterford. He will fight for the creation of a University of the South East and opposes the appalling decision to close St Bridgid's Ward in St Patrick's Hospital, and the refusal to provide alternative facilities.



Councillor Ted Tynan, Cork North Central

Ted has an unrivalled record of defending the rights of working people. As a democratic socialist Ted's priorities include the creation of jobs, the housing of those on the council waiting list and the need for renegotiation of household mortgages at current property values. He is to the fore in confronting the ongoing threat to the Mercy University Hospital.

Ballymun death; a turning point...

Francis Donohoe

The death of a young mother of two from hypothermia must be a turning point in the state's approach to the right to warmth, Dublin North West WP representative John Dunne has stated.

Dunne said a coroner court finding that 30-year-old Rachel Peavoy died of hypothermia in her Ballymun flat in January 2010 was "completely unacceptable" and supported a call for a full public inquiry into the circumstances.

The inquest heard how Rachel had contacted Dublin City Council in relation to the loss of her heating but was told it would not be turned back on as flats around her were empty and regeneration work was ongoing. Rachel died in the bedroom of her "perilously cold" flat on January 11, 2010.

Cork WP councillor Ted Tynan said heating was a problem countrywide. He said he had personally dealt with several families whose electricity supply had been cut off because of problems paying large bills.

Price controls needed

Kevin Brannigan

While the establishment is forcing reductions in wages and jobs, the cost of living for many remains unaffordable.

Consumer price index statistics for the month ending December 2010, released by the Central Statistics Office, show how there was a 7.1 per cent rise in fuel prices between November and December. A recent Eurostat study also found that many home produced essentials such as bread, meat, milk or eggs are costing between 20 per cent and 40 per cent more in the Republic than in other EU member states.

WP president Mick Finnegan said: "There have been verified reports of all the petrol stations having put up their prices over the weekend by a uniform 5 cent per litre. They can go up and down again in the space of a few days based purely on what the petrol stations owners think they can extract from consumers."

He added: "What is needed is the introduction of price regulation to ensure that the economy has the stability to get going again and people can plan their lives around fair pricing rather than have all their meagre incomes grabbed by profiteers."

Time to build a new Ireland

The Workers' Party is fighting the Dail election on the basis of a ten-point plan to reshape our economy and society so together we can build a progressive democratic socialist secular state. In constituencies where there is no Workers' Party candidate - and in preference choices - supporters are advised to "Vote Left and Keep Left" by voting for candidates who endorse a socialist and progressive policy platform.

Ten-Point Programme includes:

- 1: Opposition to an IMF/EU deal which has no democratic mandate.
 - 2: A taxation system which ensures that billionaire tax exiles pay up and that those who can afford the most pay the most.
 - 3: A stimulus package which grows the economy creates jobs and public infrastructure and generates tax revenues.
 - 4: Development of our vast oil and gas resources in the national interest.
 - 5: The revamping of our state and semi-state companies under democratic control and accountability, as the engine of economic growth and recovery.
- For more on the WP programme see: www.workersparty.net
To support the WP election fund, send a contribution to Sean Garland, WP National Treasurer, 48 North Great Georges Street Dublin 1 or to Workers' Party Development Fund, Permanent TSB 300 Lower Rathmines Road, Dublin 6. Acc No: 80009295. Bank Code: 99-06-05

Northern Ireland Needs an Opposition

Last autumn, the Con-Dem coalition introduced a package of vicious cuts in public provision ostensibly aimed at reducing the government deficit. In reality, the cuts represent a deepening attack on the working class and on the public service ethos as the ultra-rich seek to use the crisis that they created to bolster their position. Justin O'Hagan analyses how the cuts will be implemented in Northern Ireland and what the alternatives might be.

Following the Con-Dem Spending Review, the Stormont government (and their counterparts in Scotland and Wales) were asked to put together a local Budget in line with the cuts to the regional bloc spending grant that millionaire British Chancellor Gideon 'George' Osborne had announced.

Northern Ireland's block grant, which had been in the region of £9.3 billion, will be £9.4 billion in 2011-2012 and £9.5 billion at the end of the four year period which the Spending Review covers. Taking into account inflation this represents an accumulative fall of almost 7 per cent in real terms.

After much public bickering and delay during which Sinn Féin and the DUP played to their respective constituencies, on 15th December the DUP/Sinn Féin Coalition partners eventually published a Draft Budget Document. If approved, the Budget will remove between £4-5bn from public expenditure in Northern Ireland over the four year period commencing 1 April 2011.

Initially it was difficult to respond in detail to the provisions of the Budget because – typical of the way that Stormont works – the details were to be laid out by each department early in January 2011. However, even in December 2010 the broad outline and some of the details indicated that while the Budget contained a few progressive crumbs, in the main the two big Stormont Parties had produced a neo-liberal document which would hit the poorest hardest, further the decline of the economy and increase unemployment by tens of thousands.

The UK-wide 'reform' – i.e. destruction- of the national welfare system is another major issue for Northern Ireland as the local Executive has no control over national changes to benefits or tax credits. Because the local population is more dependent upon welfare benefits than other UK regions, the expected cuts of up to £20 billion in welfare payments will have a disproportionate impact upon the population in the North and will nega-

tively impact the local economy.

Under the terms of the Stormont Budget and welfare 'reform' emanating from Westminster, in December 2010 it was clear that at the very least there would be massive cuts in education, as well as public land and property, such as Belfast Harbour, being sold off in short-term asset stripping exercises. Despite talk of ring-fencing the health budget John Compton, chief executive of the Northern Ireland Health and Social Services Board, told Radio Ulster that as a result of the cuts between 3,000 to 4,000 doctors, nurses and other staff in the health service in Northern Ireland would lose their jobs, that there would be a doubling of waiting-time for medical treatment.

The Budget is predicated on Stormont earning £540 million from the sale of public assets but this figure relies on a wildly optimistic expectation of future property prices. When this sell-off doesn't work, the Sinn Féin/DUP Stormont Coalition will introduce even greater austerity cutbacks and levies. In another example of optimism bordering on innumeracy, the Department of Finance hopes the new plastic bag tax of 15 pence on each bag will yield £4 million a year over the next 4 years. As BBC commentator Mark Devenport notes, "if each bag costs 15 pence and the Executive receives all the proceeds I reckon we [in Northern Ireland] would have to buy 26 million bags each year to provide the required amount of revenue". That's a lot of plastic bags.

Levies aside, in relation to its cuts agenda, for thousands of workers this Budget will mean disaster. The pay freeze for the 12,000 civil servants under Stormont control, earning over £21,000, is a clear attack on working class civil servants and their families and localities. In the UK as a whole 4,000 public sector managers get paid £117,000 a year or more. A pay freeze for this group of people might mean a few belt-tightening exercises but will hardly prove disastrous. For those workers earning in and around £21,000 a pay freeze will mean that they and their families will go without basic

goods and services. More generally, the 29% of people who earn less than £300 per week in Northern Ireland will be disastrously affected by cutbacks in public sector provision, while for the 25% earning £800 and above cutbacks will hardly affect them at all. Moreover, as unemployment in the public sector and related sectors increases, the number of unemployed workers will increase by the thousands.

By mid-January 2011 each of the Stormont Departments had produced budget documents and, as expected, the budgets contain a catalogue of cuts.

In health, Ulster Unionist Minister Michael McGimpsey announced £828m cuts, which will lead – as predicted – to 4,000 job losses (including compulsory redundancies), longer waiting lists, the introduction of community care charges and a massive reduction in home-care packages. The Health Department is to go ahead with building a satellite radiotherapy unit at Altnagelvin Hospital in Derry, but is warning that there will be no cash to run it. Unless things change, the brand new building will stand empty. Moreover, there will be no revenue funding for a proposed Fire and Rescue Service Training College. McGimpsey's blunt announcement of these cuts led to attacks from the DUP's Sammy Wilson as well as Sinn Féin's John O'Dowd, who the week before had been in front of the cameras defending Conor Murphy's disastrous handling of the recent water crisis. The lack of joined-up government at Stormont is displayed in the degree to which MLAs defend the decisions of Ministers from their own parties. As blogger Mick Fealty puts it, "Ministerial responsibility? It depends on who the Minister is".

Education Minister, Sinn Féin's Caitriona Ruane, will oversee cuts in her department amounting to £300m. A further £41million will be cut from the department's school building budget to "minimise the impacts in the classroom". As it stands there is already a £400 million backlog in the school maintenance budget. Moreover, £10m has

“”
here we are
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of the very
people who
caused the
mess.



**WHO WILL STEP INTO THE RING
WITH CUTBACK CAMERON?**

**DAVID
CAMERON**

**UNDISPUTED ETON BOYS SCHOOL
FEATHERWEIGHT CHAMPION**

10 ROUNDS VS 10 ROUNDS

**TO BE
CONFIRMED**

THE PEOPLE'S CHAMPION

**VENUE
STORMONT**

ALL YEAR LONG

**AT STAKE:
THE FUTURE OF NORTHERN IRELAND**

been set aside to pay for redundancies over the next two years, indicating that job losses are planned. Children will be going to schools which are crumbling around them. On top of this there will be cuts to school bus services, support for classroom assistants, and school meals. Across all the Departments similar cuts have been rolled out. As Unison's Patricia McKeown says, "They have put the health and well-being of the entire population at risk."

If only because it has been most vocal in its opposition to cuts Sinn Féin must take special blame for its part in drafting this Budget. For all its talk of the ne-

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cessity of spending our way out of recession, in the Draft Budget Sinn Féin has adopted the neo-liberal Con-Dem agenda. The Budget they have helped to write affirms that "the challenge for the Northern Ireland Executive [...] is to both rebuild the economy in the aftermath of the recession and to rebalance it towards the private sector in the context of the constrained public expenditure position" clause 2.30 and Chapter 3 of the document sets out the background to the UK deficit in terms that entirely reflect the Con-Dem austerity agenda, with its talk of "reducing welfare costs and wasteful public spending" (3.6). The Con-Dem Gov-

ernment is set to publish a position paper on Northern Ireland and following the public consultation "a draft Economic Strategy will be developed and this will also reflect the outcome of the UK Coalition Government Paper on rebalancing the Northern Ireland economy" in favour of the private sector (2.33). (As I write, in late January, this document has not yet been made public.)

But is there any realistic alternative to administering austerity for Sinn Féin other than shutting down Stormont and leaving the cuts to the Direct Rule of Northern Ireland secretary Owen Patterson? Under the present arrangements every party in Stormont is in government, with the exception of a few independents and a Green. Sinn Féin will argue that because of the consensual nature of decision making, they are sometimes forced support positions that they don't entirely agree with.

However, it might now be time for some of the bigger parties at Stormont to change the nature of politics by removing themselves from government and going into opposition. This idea has recently been favourably mooted by UUP Chief Whip, Fred Cobain and by Owen Patterson. In 2008 the SDLP's Mark Durkan spoke of a day when we might see the removal the "ugly scaffolding" of compulsory coalition. These parties have their own reasons for adopting this position but from a progressive point of view it might begin to align politics in Northern Ireland along class lines. Writing in the Newsletter commentator Nick Garbutt has stated that, There needs to be an alternative to this:

"The most important lesson that should have been learned from the credit crunch was that capitalism in its current form does not work. Yet here we all are taking orders from and suffering hardship at the hands of the very people who caused the mess.

In Northern Ireland we have parties that represent Catholics and parties that represent Protestants. Yet increasingly religious division is irrelevant.

What matters is the economy, how it is run and how we all benefit from it. Politics in Northern Ireland needs to be realigned to reflect this.

Until it does important voices will go unheard, and important sections of our community will not have their interests represented."

Will any political parties or even individual MLAs have the courage to go into opposition against the cuts agenda? With public anger growing and elections coming in May, some may be tempted.

Who pays the piper?

Angela Nagle asks what is the real agenda of Ireland's vocal anti-abortion lobby?

In the weeks leading up to the Republic's 2011 Budget, as the IMF were descending for 'talks' and plans were being laid out to widen the gap between rich and poor, a billboard campaign ran across the country which fitted perfectly into the government rhetoric of the moment. They read: "Me. You. Everybody. We're all just grown up embryos."

The campaign was run by the anti-abortion group Youth Defence, whose 'private donations' enable them to run some of the most expensive political poster and online campaigns in the country. While Youth defence refused to reveal the campaign's cost, this 'Me You Everybody' campaign involving 120 billboards 100,000 postcards and a web campaign, is estimated to have cost around €200,000.

A similar costly campaign calling for a 'Vote for life' was run by Youth Defence's Northern Ireland affiliate Precious Life in the run-up to the 2010 Westminster elections.

This group also organised a 'conference' at Stormont attended by vocal southern anti-abortionists including Patricia Casey of the Department of Psychiatry UCD.

Meanwhile, in the voluntary sector, a recent survey by umbrella organisation The Wheel showed that a devastating one in five Irish charities face possible bankruptcy this year,

many of whom care for children. Between 2008 and 2009 the number of children living in consistent poverty increased by 26,684.

It is a raw statistical inevitability that this number will continue to rise directly as a result of the IMF led economic agenda.

Despite the anti-abortion lobby's best efforts, there have been two recent leaps forward in women's reproductive choice in Ireland, namely Boots' decision to provide emergency contraception without prescription and the European Court of Human Rights' demand that the Irish government properly legislate for the most basic level of human rights regarding life saving abortions. Both of these changes, campaigned for by Irish feminist activists for decades and now in keeping with mainstream Irish opinion, have been effectively forced into being by the free market and European bureaucracy in the total absence of courage on the part of the Irish state to stand up to these hysterical anti-abortion bullies.

With a busy and apparently well-staffed PR machine, Youth Defence have made no condemnation of the Budget's attacks on women and children and have never engaged in helpful actions to improve their lives. For a group whose only moral weapon used to beat would-be mothers is their rapturous love of



babies, their lack of concern about the lived material reality of babies in Ireland has been so consistent one might suspect that their campaigns are not motivated by love but by something else.

The future of the born and the unborn may be crumbling before us but at least we won't start letting sexually-active women away with it, right? And as our inequality deepens, the callous and stupid words 'Me You Everybody' come as little comfort.

Tony O'Reilly - aka 'the bean baron' - aka Sir Anto

Born in Dublin in 1936, Tony O'Reilly was Ireland's first billionaire. Forbes said he was 677th richest person in the world in 2008 – worth \$1.8 billion. But now he is worth much, much less.

Although a leading tax fugitive, like so many of the 1%, Tony is not prevented through his network of newspapers, which include The Irish Independent, Belfast Telegraph, The Sunday Independent, The Irish Star, The Sunday World and The Evening Herald in having a major influence on how and what news is reported to the Irish public. Tony was also in early on the "great oil and gas giveaway" through his ownership of the Providence exploration company.

Tony makes a big deal out of his charitable activities, which seem significant until you consider they are a fraction of what he would pay in tax

if he was taxed as you and I are.

He made his first big money in beans as CEO and Chairman of the H.J. Heinz Company between 1979 and 1998. During this time he moved into media ownership, developing his interest in Independent News & Media, mining and resource exploitation.

Down the years, Tony has enjoyed unrivalled access to the political elite. Bertie Ahern was a regular private dinner guest and secret meetings with Brian Cowen in the lead-up to the 2007 general election generated controversy. His dealings with Fianna Fail have been inquired into at the Flood/Mahon Tribunal but Tony has assured us everything was always above board.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Tony did very well out of the privatisation of Eircom. He was a leading member of the Valentia consortium that bought



Eircom in 2002 and then sold it for a huge profit in 2005 after getting rid of 3000 workers.

When the crash started, Waterford Glass – owned by Waterford Wedgwood, which Tony chaired until 2009 – was one of the first major closures, with 480 employees thrown on the scrap heap.

Although business isn't so good for Tony recently, he still owns at least six big residences, including No 2 Fitzwilliam Square.

He also has a mansion in the Bahamas, a country house with stud farm at Kilcullen, another in Cork and a Chateau in France.

O'Reilly was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in the 2001 "for services to Northern Ireland" – and is now known by some as Sir Anto. In November 2009 Tony was placed in the Sunday Independent top ten inspirational people by his employees Emer O'Reilly and Brendan O'Connor.

Lancing the property bubble

Housing continues to be at the centre of the Irish economic and political crisis. At the sharp end of the crisis are the commuter belts areas where whole communities are suffering the hardship of mortgage debt and negative equity, according to Alan Myler.

Many commuter belt families were at the forefront of the property scam. They were enticed into buying houses at the peak of the market, encouraged by banks, developers, estate agents, the mass media and their lavish property supplements and their lifestyle TV programmes – the “money pushers”, as celebrity economist David McWilliams refers to them.

In a conspiracy to indebt a generation, not only were young families led by their noses into the bubble, but with prices increasing beyond the reach of ordinary people on average wages, their elderly parents were then encouraged to indebt themselves, to “release equity” on their own homes, in order to get these young families on to the property ladder.

There was no free choice, no alternative, because government policy over decades, irrespective of whether it was Fianna Fail or Fine Gael in the hot-seat, has been to stop the large-scale investment in social housing schemes of the 1960s and 70s. To get a roof over your head, people had to buy into the bubble.

And the bubble burst. What does this mean for ordinary people living in the houses and apartments that were built during the bubble?

It means negative equity of a loan

from the bank that is bigger than the value of the house, and mortgage rates that are only going upwards. It means long-term indebtedness, combined with insecurity over employment, increased taxes, reduced wages and social benefits.

There is no financial spreadsheet that can measure the cost in human suffering which results from this hopeless situation. Stress, sleeplessness, breakdown in relationships as couples struggle to cope with the financial strain, depression, increasing prescription rates for anti-depressants, increasing suicide rates. This is the reality of life behind closed doors for many families in the sprawling new estates built out in the commuter belts.

How long must the victims of the money pushers continue to suffer? Even the OECD has voiced qualified support for a “NAMA for mortgage holders” scheme, where mortgage loans held by people on family homes will be scaled back towards the current market values of their property, removing the negative equity and easing the financial pressure on families across the country. A “haircut” on mortgages would push the excess debt back to the banks. But the government ignores these calls, saying that it introduces issues of “moral hazard” and that the banks couldn’t absorb the additional debt. This is despite

arguments from even the most orthodox of international economists that it makes sense even for the banks, because if they don’t accept the haircut on these mortgages, it is quite clear that it will lead to widespread defaults by families on these debts, unable to keep up payments, handing back keys, bankruptcy.

As Meath Workers’ Party representative Seamus McDonagh stated: “It is clear that political action is required to address all the problems relating to housing. Not the economic problems for the banks – we’ve heard enough about that already.

“It is necessary now to invest again in housing in order to benefit society. Family homes need to be released from excessive debt.

“Local authority housing lists need to be matched to the vast housing bank of empty properties which are under effective state ownership via the nationalised banks and NAMA. Focusing on the needs of the homeless must also be part of this resolution.

“There are no additional costs to the state in addressing this issue for the benefit of society.

“It is simply a question of using what have already become state assets and liabilities, but using them for the benefit of society rather than for the benefit of the international financiers.”

“”
How long must the victims of the money pushers continue to suffer?



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The man who keeps the lights on

Tom Parlon once labelled him a lunatic, he counts Fenian leader John Devoy amongst his ancestors and recently frazzled nerves in Leinster house with his call for civil disobedience. Kevin Brannigan meets up with TEEU General Secretary Eamon Devoy.



TEEU leader Eamon Devoy

Pic - Paula Geraghty

In late November, Eamon Devoy's name swept across a media hungry for sound-bites on the financial crisis. At his union's biennial conference, he threatened that 'Technical Electrical Engineers Union' (TEEU) members would mount a campaign of 'civil disobedience' against the Fianna Fail/Green cutback agenda. Not everyone was sure as to exactly what he meant, particularly when he later warned that Ireland was about to plough into a period of 'significant civil unrest'.

Only days after Devoy's pronouncement, the Green Party was calling for an election. Had a Trade Union leader threatening to muster the forces of the Irish working class into a coherent campaign against the cuts rattled the government's junior party? Had Devoy, as he readily admits, undebated sound byte inadvertently shown the pos-

sible strengths of the Trade Union movement?

The TEEU General Secretary is unwilling to take such grand credit but feels that the Greens calling for an election three days after the TEEU conference, was more than just a coincidence.

Speaking to LookLeft in the TEEU's new Gardiner Street offices, two months on from that day in late November, the Dubliner can now also reflect on what exactly he meant by the term civil disobedience.

"By civil disobedience, we meant citizens not paying their TV licence or local authority charges – basically not cooperating with the institutions of the state. When you analyse it though, and we have analysed it, you come to the conclusion that it would only have limited effect because if everyone didn't pay their TV licence, you would only affect workers in RTE and you wouldn't

get directly at the State so it's very difficult to get directly at the state through civil disobedience."

When the history of the IMF's takeover of the Irish economy is written, November won't just be remembered for Devoy's quote but also for the ICTU-led march for 'A fairer way', which brought 100,000 onto the streets of Dublin.

For many Trade Unionists, the booing from the crowd that day served as a stark reminder of how some see the ICTU leadership as being as culpable for the current crisis as their IBEC and Fianna Fail counterparts. For Devoy though the heckling was an unnecessary low point.

"I don't think they were Trade Union members that were doing that (booing). Some people refer to people who were involved in that activity as the far left, I don't call them that, I call them the far loo-





nies, because quite frankly I don't think they have any interest in the interests of working people, they're just against any form of institution and they see the Trade Unions as some form of institution. I can't explain how they think or behave but I can say this, the ICTU is the largest civil society organisation with about 860,000 members and if people are making those comments and complaints and shouting or using abusive language either at Jack O'Connor or David Begg they have no mandate for that and speak for no one other than themselves.

"They did start a chant and people got caught up in the chant but I honestly don't believe they have any mandate and Jack O'Connor and David Begg do."

When broached on the topic of Trade Union culpability and the unhappiness the hecklers may have had with Union leaders taking places on boards, Devoy quickly rallies to the ICTU's defence.

"I'm outraged by those comments. I sit on two boards, I sit on the Health and Safety board and I'm on the national qualification authority of Ireland. In this Union, we see two or three people a year killed in the workplace and sometimes they're the lucky ones as people are left paralysed and blind as a result of electrical accidents or falls.

"I've a great interest in health and Safety so that's why I'm on the board of the Health and Safety authority. I should be on there! Why shouldn't the trade union movement have a say on behalf of the people it represents?"

"There's no money involved in it, I never claimed a penny in expenses I go there for the right reasons and I don't apologise to (right-wing politicians) Leo Varadkar or Shane Ross or any of the others. I'd love to confront them about it and some day when they stop throwing rocks from behind closed doors at people I'd love to come out and debate with them, they wouldn't stand a chance with me."

While Eamon is no stranger to the airwaves, having once famously been called a lunatic by former PD Minister and current Construction industry federation boss Tom Parlon, he does concede that the right are winning the information battle putting the Unions on the back foot.

"The way the media works is they get out there and try and get that sound byte out there and by the time you try and get out and counteract it you're told there's no room for you on that show, that you haven't been scheduled on that programme. Today's news is today's news and by the time you get a chance to come back no one wants to know about it so the sound byte sticks and that's how they play the game and it is a game."

“” They said 'right, Devoy is in charge of it' and I said 'Oh Shit'

"I'm busy trying to look after working people and I don't want to spend my life chasing after Leo Varadkar and Shane Ross to put out another sound byte to say what he said was wrong and then give him another platform to come back at us again so it's a damned if you do and damned if you don't exercise. A lot of Union members are starting to believe the propaganda – not TEEU members as they know who I am and what I stand for – but the broader membership. The right are winning a media battle by constantly putting caustic comments out there, but I've often tried to combat that by saying something out of the blue but the media don't want positive."

One major news story which Devoy was the centre of was the electricians' strike of 2009, which saw the TEEU engage in the first major industrial action since the onset of the recession.

"Coming up to the strike two things happened, Tom Parlon said the registered employers' agreement (which set standardised agreed employment rates across the industry) was old news as far as he was concerned he said take them on, the Union members won't stand up to it and on top of that he wanted a 10 per cent pay cut. People were saying the construction industry was finished; all the building is done, and it was, but when you put up the buildings after the bricklayers and carpenters are all gone the electricians are still there. So even though in July 2009 while they were saying the construction industry is all said and done a lot of our members were still at work on those big projects."

"I wasn't the General Secretary at the time but somebody had to be given responsibility for it and in May 2009 the Executive called on the then General Secretary to

implement a dispute and they said 'right, Devoy is in charge of it' and I said 'Oh Shit'."

"It wasn't an industry I'd worked in or knew an awful lot about, but I set about immediately getting an organising team in Dublin and Cork into action. They set about contacting members in the different branches who would have been laid off and built up an army of 39 people who were working full time for a number of weeks before the dispute, going out and meeting the boys on the construction sites and keeping them informed. The Trade Union organisations aren't known as being great communicators but that's what won it for us."

Eamon, who represented the Tara Mines craft workers in 1999, helping save 625 jobs, believes it was because of the firm stance taken by the Unions that Tom Parlon and the rest of the electrical employers organisations caved in, in record time.

"When it came to it there was no backing down from the employers, we went to the Labour Relations Commission to try head off the employers but the bosses said 'Ah no we're not worried about this it's not, going to happen.' So we pressed the button."

"I was personally on the picket in Lixlip that morning and everyone stayed out and I'm just not talking about the electricians-all the construction workers stayed out. I started getting text messages from all the sites in the country and one by one they all came out. We had closed every site in Ireland! Tom Parlon sent an e-mail to me looking for an immediate meeting to solve the dispute which meant that after only 12 hours of industrial action he had a white flag out. That was a great achievement."

While the TEEU may have been victorious because of industrial action, Eamon believes that Unions are playing a dangerous game when they threaten strike action and don't pull the trigger. In general he hasn't been overly impressed with the Trade Union movement's response to the cutbacks.

"In February 2009 we had a so-called protest that was intended to be a 24-hour stoppage across all Irish industry lock, stock and barrel. Every Union was to go out and ballot their own members we balloted ours and got over 70 per cent in favour of industrial action other unions didn't bother asking their members."

"When they started talking about another 24-hour strike coming up to Christmas and after I'm on record as saying when you all step up to the line I'll be there with you, but we're not going to be the vanguard for everyone else."

From Clondalkin to Derry, building a real student movement

Donal Fallon discusses the development of the Free Education for Everyone (FEE) campaign – the radical alternative to an increasingly right wing controlled Student Union establishment.



Gardai Baton Students on Merrion Row

Late last year the leadership of the Union of Students of Ireland (USI) voted to call for the renegotiation of the Croke Park Agreement on public service pay, so that those who have already suffered drastic wage cuts could suffer more.

While many of us on the left opposed the Croke Park Agreement, owing to the attacks within it on the rights of workers to strike for example, USI's opposition is based on a belief that workers are being paid too much, and that it was time to reassess pay and pensions. The position of USI, proposed by UCD SU President Paul Lynam, amounted to nothing but an attack on working people.

Of course, such a right-wing stance from the USI was by no means surprising. This year, the national students union is in the hands of a young man named Gary Redmond. A recent article in the Phoenix magazine examining Redmond noted that he "can hardly be described as the Irish answer to Daniel Cohn-Bendit."

Never mind Cohn-Bendit, Redmond is very much to the right of any student leader seen in this country in a long time. The article noted that Redmond "had a very good relationship with the university authorities and was even asked by the college to run for a second term as UCDSU president", but missed out on a howler, an image of Gary Redmond alongside several Fianna Fail ministers at Belfield bearing a sign encouraging the viewer to 'VOTE FIANNA FAIL FOR JOBS.' Nothing

so clearly highlights the gombeenism at the heart of the USI under the 'leadership' of careerists like Redmond.

With a national student union very much hand in hand with the political establishment, never has there been more of a need for a radical student alternative in this country. Recent weeks have seen a huge increase in the Free Education for Everyone campaign's activity nationwide. Branches are now active throughout the Republic and in both Derry and Belfast. FEE, as a grassroots and explicitly left-wing student movement, has seen students resist the cuts of both the Tories and Fianna Fail.

Much is owed to An Garda Síochána for the sudden upsurge in FEE activity. The brutal state response to the student occupation of the Department of Finance on November 3 2010 was the catalyst for the re-birth of a radical student left in Ireland.

A week on from the protest on Merrion Row where Gardai batoned students involve in a peaceful sit down protest, FEE mobilised over 500 young people to protest outside Pearse Street Garda Station, with the simple message that we will not be intimidated or beaten off our own streets. This demonstration was followed by localised and sustained activity against education cuts.

At NUI Galway, students from the FEE campaign blockaded the Galway branch of Anglo Irish Bank, forcing its early closure. At NUI Maynooth, students and staff united to march on the office of local Fianna Fail T.D. Aine Brady who lets flats to students. The

daughter and wife of former TDs, with two brothers also in the Dail, Brady perhaps embodies all that is wrong with the gombeen political culture of Fianna Fail, with one hand in property and the other in politics. Unlike USI, where student 'leaders' call for the slashing of workers' wages, FEE invited the on-campus trade unions, local workers and the unemployed to join us at Brady's business premises and Fianna Fail office.

There has been sustained campaigning against education cuts at secondary level too. In Castlebar, hundreds of young people walked out of their secondary schools on December 9 and made their way to the office of Fianna Fail TD Beverly Cooper Flynn, marching behind the Free Education for Everyone banner. In Clondalkin, budget day saw students there grab the attention of the national media by descending upon the office of John Curran, their local Fianna Fail T.D. When Shane Donnelly, a young student activist, was threatened with expulsion for his role in the walkout, school students from all over Ireland rallied to his cause. In Maynooth, at the office of Aine Brady, the placards read 'Maynooth support Clondalkin students!'. It was clear Clondalkin and Castlebar were showing the way forward.

The days of Mé Féin politics in this country are over. The USI approach has failed. In 1996 the registration fee stood at £150, the new 'Student Contribution' will now be €2000 with a life of indebtedness now threatened by a new scheme of student loans.

USI have never managed to overturn an increase in the registration fee, never mind abolish it. FEE are demanding education free from all user charges, free from corporate governance structures and bureaucrats on super-salaries, research free from commercial distortion, and academic labour free from casualisation. While we must get USI back into the hands of the radical student left, there is an immediate need for a radical student fightback against austerity cuts. I would appeal to all students and education staff interested in the campaign to contact us.

FEE can be contacted at

<http://free-education.info/>



The West Awake

FEE activist Aine Mannion outlines how the campaign developed in NUI Galway.

In November 2008 the 'Public Forum on Education' held in NUI Galway was attended by a dozen members of the youth wings of various political parties. After general condemnation of the possible re-introduction of third-level fees and the cuts to NUIG nursing places students from UCD spoke about a new group – 'Free Education for Everyone' – they had set up to fight for the right to education and those at the meeting voted to establish a branch in Galway.

The dual aims of making young people recognise the power their actions had along with moving the discussion from fees to a wider debate on education might have set the standard a bit high but it got people actively involved. For many, FEE was their first experience of campaigning, with the majority of those who joined having

no connection to any political party – no one group had control and there has been constant debate on how FEE Galway should act.

Students were frustrated at how easily politicians ignored marches with ill-defined aims so protests were organised against Fianna Fáil's presence in NUIG under the slogan 'They're blocking our access to college so we'll block their access to our college'. TDs Frank Fahy, Batt O'Keefe, Eamon O'Cuiv and Bertie Ahern met with peaceful pickets and both Fahy and Ahern ended up cancelling events. Marches and occupations were organised to the offices of Sean O'Neachtain MEP and Minister Eamon O'Cuiv.

Subsequent events proved FEE Galway correct in doubting the sincerity of the Green Party veto on third-level fees because it did not address the wider issues of inequality. Education shouldn't be seen in

“““

They're blocking our access to college so we'll block their access to our college

isolation from the rest of the cut-backs so while FEE Galway has attended the USI marches in Dublin and Galway, members have also marched against the wider budget cuts with ICTU and Galway Unites Against Cuts. Managing to blockade and shut down Anglo Irish Bank for the day has led to agreement that other such actions will keep occurring until the government starts putting people ahead of banks.

The battle for Free Education in Ireland extends to Belfast and Derry

Student activists in Derry and Belfast have begun to organise at both secondary and third level to resist austerity cuts in the north, to protect the EMA system at secondary level and to resist any increase in college tuition fees.

An occupation at Queens University Belfast by the FEE group marked the arrival of the campaign there. The protest against the Con-Dem led hike in university fees was staged outside the Lanyon. The target of the protest was the QUB Vice Chancellor Peter Gregson, who has been outspoken in support of a dramatic increase in fees. It has recently been revealed that Gregson is paid in excess of £200,000 a year, and is a member of the Mayfair gentlemen's club in London – paid for by the University! This information certainly provided the protestors with some interesting ammunition. Why should students be expected to pay £9,000 in fees while Gregson lives the high life?

The demand to have VC Gregson come out and explain himself was made and the police left. After some time, Pro-vice Chancellor Tony Gallagher came into the foyer with police and security accompanying him. Gallagher repeated the University's position on the cuts, but was very weak under questioning from the protestors. This was certainly an unsatisfactory exchange of views. Gallagher has promised to take the protestors points to Gregson. After around three hours, the occupation ended

and the protestors, accompanied by a further 30, marched around the Lanyon building and through the Student's Union building, finishing on the front steps.

Uniquely for Belfast, in the context of anti-fees activities across the UK and north of Ireland, the Student's Union at Queen's has actually distanced itself from the protests. It seems outrageous that the body elected by students to represent students' interests has failed to support this stand against fees. It might seem less outrageous when we consider that those in the SU probably place more importance on the appearance of their CVs, than they do in fighting to defend the students they supposedly represent.

The protest and occupation at Queen's University represents an important starting point for further action against fees, and against the cuts generally. It is the hope of the protestors that more students and staff and the wider public will join in future actions and make a stand against Con-Dem cuts and attacks. Secondary school students in Belfast took part in a national walk-out against fees December 9 and showed that they too have a part to play in the campaign for free education.

That protest, staged at City Hall,

ended with a police assault upon the demonstration. Like the scenes witnessed in Dublin on November 3, it was evident that a message was being sent to the student movement and indeed the broader protest movement with regards protesting austerity plans.

FEE Derry have organised a number of walkouts at secondary school level in Derry, to protest against education cuts and protect the EMA. Led by secondary level students, a series of walkouts, protests and democratic meetings have seen the foundation of a new, radical student movement in the city there. The politics of FEE Derry were clear to be seen in their own distributed literature, which noted that "it must also be acknowledged that this struggle, is part of a larger attack on the lives of ordinary people and an attempt to make the poor pay for a crisis generated by the rich."

There is close co-operation between the FEE branches on both sides of the border, with the demand for free education an ideological one shared by all within the student movement. Derry and Belfast have shown the way, and it is hoped more students in the north will follow their example and resist the cuts.



“Cubs” show claws

It's time the 'Tiger Cubs' showed their claws and began the fight-back writes Donal O'Driscoll and Dan O'Neill

While many comparisons have been made between the current recession and that of the 1980s, for most of those under the age of 35, and certainly anyone under 30, those economic troubles are at their most vague childhood memories. My generation of 'Tiger cubs' that grew up in the 'Celtic Tiger' era, took for granted that the good times were here to stay.

While social exclusion was a strong feature of Celtic Tiger Ireland, for most younger people, worries about unemployment were unheard of. The concept of leaving Ireland out of economic necessity rather than for an adventure was an alien one. Rather people came here from far and near to find work, we were considered one of the wealthiest countries in the world.

However, as any keen observer of the carnivorous nature of capitalism could have predicted, greed brought it all crashing down. For the Tiger Cubs, what seemed like it would last forever, suddenly evaporated. As a result, many under-35s are now experiencing their first real taste of economic bad times. When times were good, they thought little of paying nonsensical prices for houses. Banks practically threw loans at people; it was the era of the 100 per cent mortgage. Fast forward to 2010 and the repercussions of the criminal recklessness of financial institutions are clear - young couples and individuals are lumbered with payments many can no longer afford.

Likewise, emigration is very much back on the agenda, with many 'Tiger Cubs' faced with little alternative but to leave to get work. The generation that took the good times for granted for so long, now find themselves in the coal face of the economic crisis that they had no role in creating.

While the parasitic bankers go unpunished, ordinary people, both old and young are being forced to pay for the crisis. For those who went to college during the boom years only to emerge into a world where jobs are hard to come by, there is little consolation. Likewise, for those bringing up young

families in an environment where they are faced with the very real prospect of being evicted, due to inability to pay back huge mortgage repayments, things appear bleak.

Now more than ever, younger people need to fight back. Young people need to continue to take to the streets and show that they will not tolerate being thrown on the scrap heap by those whose record of economic mismanagement is now catching up on them. The spectre of debt and emigration currently haunt the 'Tiger Cubs', but this is something that can be reversed. There is genuine anger out there, it is essential that this anger is transferred into a real political fightback that can reverse Fianna Fáil's cuts and restore some hope to a generation that was once filled with it.

Written by Donal O'Driscoll,
Workers' Party Youth



Athens, Dublin, London, Paris - Time for youth to lead the way - C

The Internet - Key to Organisat

Ask most young people these days whether they are “into politics” and they’ll look at you as if you have two heads. To many people, politics is seen as something that happens on the television and in the newspapers. Democracy is something that happens in the ballot box every five years. However, ask young people about jobs, how they are treated in work, the state of the health service or the rising cost of education and somehow politics, although not referred to as politics, isn’t in fact that distant. Young people are full of opinions regarding political issues but there is a lack of politicisation – the issues important to them are rarely engaged with on a political level.

This doesn’t need to be the case. At many stages in history, young people have worked together to create substantial political, environmental, economic and social change. The role of the young political activist today should be two

tiered. One, they should seek to encourage others around them to get involved as much as possible in campaigns focusing on political issues on a local, national and international level. Two, in doing so they should seek to create the cultural sphere in which progressive alliances can be formed and left-wing values can penetrate through the false depoliticised “common sense” dogma of established society.

All major progress comes about from people challenging the status quo. That is not to say that established political movements have not won valuable concessions over the years, however in a time of crisis for our society and economy, young people must be encouraged to at least believe that radical change for the better is feasible.

One such project that aims to encourage people not usually involved in politics to engage with political debate is teaandtoast.ie, which features articles by people





“As a people, we are excluded from any share in framing the laws by which we are governed. The higher ranks usurped the exclusive exercise of that privilege, as well as many other rights, by force, fraud, and fiction.”

The Jemmy Hope Column

This issue we take a look at some former and current student ‘leaders’.

Kevin Myers (b. 1947)
UCD (1966 - 1969)

Myers, who grew up in Leicester, England, studied history in UCD in the late 1960s. Then the campus was based in Earlsfort Terrace, now the National Concert Hall. Myers was one of the leading lights in the Students for Democratic Action (SDA) group which was driving force in the ‘Gentle Revolution’. The SDA led a series of teach-ins, sit-ins and occupations in the late 1960s. One of the most famous in February 1969 saw Myers and 200 other students occupy three rooms of the administrative building. They used a loud speaker system to address fellow students and distributed leaflets from the “liberated zone of UCD” printed on the college duplicating service which was in one of the occupied rooms. The Irish Independent proclaimed that the “black flag of anarchy (now flies) over U.C.D.” Later that year, Myers was one of 24 students up in court after a Dublin Housing Action Committee (DHAC) sit down protest on College Green. He is now a highly-paid, conservative journalist with a daily column in The Irish Independent.

Joe Duffy (b. 1954)
TCD (1977 - 1979)
Pres. TCD SU 1979/80
Pres. USI 1983/84

Duffy was a leading student radical in Trinity College and the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) in the early 1980s. He is now one of Ireland’s highest paid broadcasters and hosts his own daily, populist radio show. As a student leader, Duffy led many an occupation including one of Regent House in TCD in 1980. Four years later, in protest against the removal of medical cards for students, himself and other USI activists took over the offices of the Eastern Health Board. He spent ten days in jail for his trouble. In 1992, Duffy was the only student leader not to be invited back by Trinity to an event to mark the 400th anniversary of the college. Today, Duffy has moved on from his radical roots and paid around €400,000 by the public broadcaster, has little in common anymore with his listeners.

Gary Redmond (b. 1986)
Pres. UCDSU 2009/11
Pres. USI 2010/11

Gary Redmond, who describes his politics as ‘centre right’, is currently the president of U.S.I. He has been at the end of unprecedented criticism by current students, former students and college academics in recent times. Firstly, after a photo surfaced of him at a Ogra Fianna Fail photoshoot. Secondly, for his condemnation of students who occupied the Department of Finance and his refusal to criticise the police for their beating of students holding a sit-down protest. Finally, for his role in pushing the USI to call for the renegotiation of the Croke Park Deal, so that public-sector pay can be reduced. As UCDSU president, he was responsible for running the union into €25,000+ of deficit and supporting UCD President Hugh Brady in the introduction of student health service charges. There have been numerous calls for his resignation.



1 the way - Credit: Donal Fallon

isation

from all walks of life, all age groups and political traditions with an emphasis on building a fairer, more democratic and more sustainable country. The website is not affiliated to any political party or group and has no explicit political positions on individual issues. It encourages debate to allow people to have their voices heard. The group that set up the site also hold small social events in pubs where those involved can meet and discuss ideas in an informal setting.

Teaandtoast.ie simply aims to be a door into the world of greater political thought and activism. Although far from the solution to our ills, media projects like LookLeft and Teaandtoast.ie are vital. We need more projects such as these if we hope to come anywhere near creating the cultural conditions in which real progress can be made.

Written by Dan O'Neill Labour Party Youth Activists



THE REAL ECONO

Mapping a new economic future for Northern Ireland

In the face of a renewed onslaught from the forces of conservatism the Labour movement has sought to bring together members of the Northern Irish academic community into a new think-tank – the Centre for Progressive Economics writes Francis Donohoe.

With the fruits of neo-liberal orthodoxy in economics visible for all to see in growing unemployment, communities ransacked of investment and a general fear for the future there has never been more need for a reinvigoration of the politics of hope.

Over the last decade or more neo-liberalism has grown stronger due to the commercialisation of many areas where critical progressive thought once thrived. This has seen once progressive media outlets bend to serve the elite agenda and universities pushed into the arms of profit driven corporations for funding, resulting in the mantra of 'a pro-business approach' forcing to the fringe objective debate.

As with initiatives such as the TASC think-tank based in Dublin and Britain's Left Economic Advisory Panel (LEAP) the Centre for Progressive Economics (CPE) is an important step in the fight back against a policy agenda aimed at serving the interests of a powerful few rather than society as a whole.

The CPE was established following discussions between the labour movement and a number of academics, as the organisation's website states these "discussions identified the need for a progressive economic and social analysis to counteract the disappearance of labour and left focused research in third level institutions and its replacement by a neo-liberal orthodoxy which now dominates academia."

The CPE plans not only to act as an organising hub for progressive academics and activists in Northern Ireland but also to bring their policies to the wider public through meetings and the media.

The inaugural CPE Public seminar was held on November 29 at Queens university. On the same day the effects of latest neo-liberal economic craze – the austerity agenda – were being confronted by 100,000 people joining an ICTU march in Dublin.

At the Belfast meeting Andrew

Baker, of the Queens school of politics, laid out the problems confronting progressive thought in the era of the Con-Dem government in very direct terms.

In his paper entitled "Why Austerity is not commonsense but a politically driven nonsense", Baker systematically outlined and then demolished the Con-Dem coalition's economic rationale. He concluded: "The principal driver of the (austerity) strategy is political opportunism and a concerted effort to pin the blame on the last government. This is the coherent thread running through the narrative the government are constructing."

He added the "Government strategy looks to be an effective way of fermenting class politics, social polarization and dislocation" – a situation which at once both confronts progressives with problems and opportunities.

LEAP coordinator Andrew Fisher delivered a paper entitled "It's the politics, stupid: 'Responding to the UK Comprehensive Spending Review."

In this, Fisher focused on the vast amount of uncollected tax which could be used to address the fiscal problems of the British state, rather than attacking those on low income and welfare.

Based on research by the Tax Justice Network, he explained that there is estimated to be up to £120 billion in tax lost, avoided or uncollected in the UK each year. Rather than address this crisis, a further 5,000 job cuts and 200 office are expected to be cut from HM Revenue and Customs, the Department responsible for bringing in tax revenue in 2011.

Over the coming months, the CPE will be focusing on issues such as the relationship between the trades union movement, progressive economics, academics and academic research as well as challenging the media's constant re-enforcing of the dominant neo-liberal line when discussing the economic crisis.

For more information see:



Progressive change is possible

Economist Michael Taft calls for the building of a progressive alliance that will reshape the economy, so it meets the needs of the people rather than the elite.

In the debate over economic issues there are two sides: those who believe the path to recovery and fiscal stability is through so-called austerity (cutting back state spending), and those who believe it is through growth and development. Shake up the complex issues and many positions, and it still comes down to that simple division.

The frustrating thing for those who support growth is that the debate should be finished. The Fianna Fail/Greens admitted that their strategy of taking €14 billion out of the economy had failed (the national deficit was still growing; projected growth rates were slashed). The Irish state was being slowly pushed out of the international financial markets, no longer able to borrow the billions necessary to keep the economy moving, long before the IMF came in. The simple reason for this was investors believed – quite rightly – that austerity measures would undermine the economy's ability to generate sufficient revenue to pay off future debts.

Even the EU Commission has thrown ice-cold water over the Irish austerity programme. On the basis of their projections, we will still be in a domestic-demand recession in 2012, the deficit will barely fall and unemployment will remain high. You can sum up their prognosis in two words: game over.

But, unfortunately, the debate isn't over. Like a bad zombie film, the promoters of austerity are over-running the land of the living. They still write their op-eds, they still hold forth on current affairs programmes, saying the same thing over and over again: cut, cut, cut. The vocabulary of economic zombies is rather limited.

There is good news, however. There is now an emerging consensus among progressives. Look at the submissions and reports from groups such as ICTU, Community Platform, Claiming Our Future and many others (the list is long) and one sees considerable agreement on the economic way forward:

* A sustained and substantial public-led investment programme

* An end to austerity and cuts in

the overall level of current spending

* Fiscal consolidation must be driven through taxation, in the first instance on high-income, high-wealth groups.

* The state must not be bound to honour private banking debt – not one cent

There may be differences in details and emphasis but the principles are coherent. And as UNITE the union and numerous progressive commentators have shown, this programme is superior to that put forward by the promoters of austerity. Using macro-economic measurements they show that growth is higher, employment is higher, living standards are higher and the deficit is lower under a progressive programme.

So we've seen that austerity has failed; and not just here. Look what's happening in the UK since the Con-Dem government has introduced their cutback measures – lower growth, rising unemployment, lower deficit reduction. And in Portugal – the Central Bank there is predicting that the economy will slide back into recession this year after growing last year. And let's not forget poor Greece – a lengthening and deepening of the recession is now forcing Eurozone ministers to discuss the previously undiscussable and unmentionable – debt restructuring (meaning sovereign default). Even the UN has been warning the Eurozone countries of late – that embarking down the austerity path risks a double-dip recession.

The challenge, therefore, is to turn public debate into a contest between who support austerity and those who support growth. We know which side Fianna Fail is on. We also know which side Fine Gael is on – both accept the fiscal parameters of the austerity agenda only differing on its viciousness in certain areas but both committed to more and more spending cuts: Cutting social welfare, intensifying the down-sizing of public services, privatisation, gutting the protection of those low-paid work.

On the other side, should be, the

Labour Party, which has prioritised taxation on high income groups and proposes a €20 billion investment programme under the aegis of a state bank. There is Sinn Féin, in the south, with a more fully worked-out programme of investment, job creation and fiscal consolidation. Also the other Left parties (Workers Party, Socialist Party, People Before Profit etc.) along with community based independent politicians who support a progressive programme.

Just as importantly, there is the range of civil society organisations which support such a programme – in particular, the trade union movement.

So public debate must be arranged along the lines of a real contest between alternative strategies and visions for the economy. Some may be disappointed that there isn't more overt cooperation between the progressive parties – but one has to take this in competitive stride.

In this realigning of the national debate civil society activists and organisations have a vital role to play. There is nothing stopping them – either in an individual or official capacity – from calling on people to support the progressive Left agenda, to achieve an historical break-through in the creation of the republic's first Left government.

It is progressives, from a number of different organisations, who have put forward the analysis and proposals that have formed a coherent economic and social platform capable of challenging the Right, whether of the Fianna Fail or Fine Gael hue. It is these progressives who can provide leadership again, putting forward a simple proposition: that whichever Left party people are supporting, they should use their voices to assist other Left parties, to maximise the potential of progressive change.

The message is devastatingly simple: keep Fianna Fail out, keep Fine Gael out – build a progressive consensus that will bring Ireland out of recession.

Now let's get to good work.

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Like a bad zombie film, the promoters of austerity are over-running the land of the living.

THE REAL ECONO

Capitalism's Bootboy: the IMF's International Record

It is perhaps the ultimate testimony to the Fianna Fail/Green government's record that when the IMF's representatives arrived in Dublin in October last year they were welcomed by many, as Ultan Gillen explains it may well be a response that will be regretted.



Milton Friedman meets the Reagans

Go to the website of the International Monetary Fund, and you will find the following description of its aims.

"The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is an organization of 187 countries, working to foster global monetary cooperation, secure financial stability, facilitate international trade, promote high employment and sustainable economic growth, and reduce poverty around the world."

It is hard to disagree with these aims. No progressive person can argue with the desire to foster employment and sustainable growth and to reduce the global poverty that keeps over three billion people eking out an existence on less than \$2.50 per day. However, the actual purpose of the IMF is a lot different: the real job of the IMF is to protect and promote the interests of international capital.

The IMF's primary method for doing that is to offer to "help" indebted countries by loaning them money at high rates of interest in return for the "liberalization" of their inter-

nal markets and their trade relations with other countries. In practice, this means ruthless cuts to public services and social security, the selling-off at low prices of valuable public assets, and taxation policies and terms of trade that suit the multinational corporations and governments of the strong imperialist countries. It is not for nothing that the IMF has been described as "a kind of global loan shark".

The costs of IMF "aid" are not just financial. The most obvious effect of an IMF "bailout" is the debt that generations of a country's real producers of wealth –the working class– will have to pay off. But there are other consequences. In the aftermath of the fall of the socialist states in eastern Europe, there was a rush to claim these newly-available markets for the neo-liberal form of capitalism. The IMF provided the shock troops, teaching the methods and ideology of capitalism to the new elites seizing control of public assets for themselves.

The human cost of this IMF-led

transition to neo-liberalism has been immense. A study undertaken by academics from Cambridge and Yale has demonstrated how IMF diktats on reducing public spending on health have caused increased deaths from tuberculosis in eastern Europe. "Participating in an IMF program was associated with increased tuberculosis incidence, prevalence, and mortality rates by 13.9 per cent, 13.2 per cent, and 16.6 per cent, respectively. Each additional year of participation in an IMF program was associated with increased tuberculosis mortality rates by 4.1 per cent, and each 1 per cent increase in IMF lending was associated with increased tuberculosis mortality rates by 0.9 per cent. On the other hand, we estimated a decrease in tuberculosis mortality rates of 30.7 per cent ... associated with exiting the IMF programmes."

In short, IMF economic reform programmes are associated with significantly worsened tuberculosis incidence, prevalence, and mortality rates in post-communist Eastern European and former Soviet countries, independent of other political, socio-economic, demographic, and health changes in these countries.

A separate study undertaken by academics from the universities of Oxford, Cambridge and London and published in the medical journal, the Lancet, showed that the rapid and widespread introduction of privatisation in the former socialist countries in the early 1990s raised the death rate by 13 per cent. The Republic's health service has already been starved of funds by the unlamented Mary Harney and her predecessors. With Colm McCarthy's commission on state assets already seeking to privatise as many public assets as possible even before the IMF arrived, the life expectancy as well as lifestyle of Irish workers is potentially under serious threat.

The IMF began life as part of the Bretton Woods agreements of 1944. These were intended to create a series of new institutions that would regu-

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It is not for nothing that the IMF has been described as “a kind of global loan shark”

NOMY

late international economic activity according to Keynesian principles of state backed investment. However, in the 1970s the IMF was captured by those who advocated the neo-liberal principles of Milton Friedman and his Chicago School of Economics. Friedman would reach the pinnacle of his influence as an advisor to former US president Ronald Reagan; but he and his disciples were first provided with an opportunity to shape a country's destiny by the Chilean dictator General Pinochet after his CIA-backed coup against the democratically-elected socialist government in 1973. Friedman met Pinochet in Chile in 1975 to discuss his theories.

Despite the neo-liberal propaganda about Pinochet creating an economic miracle, the reality is that neo-liberalism massively damaged the Chilean economy, multiplying unem-

ployment fivefold in ten years, and massively increasing poverty. Chile's recovery was in fact stimulated by increased government involvement in the economy from 1983. The blend of right-wing military dictatorship and neo-liberal economic policies was repeated by the IMF in many countries in Latin America and beyond. As in Chile, the typical result was increased inequality and the further subordination of the economy to global capitalism.

The IMF's attempts to disguise the reality of its interventions behind progressive rhetoric cannot hide the truth. It exists to enforce inequality within and between countries, and to ensure that as many parts of the world as possible are fully subordinated to neo-liberalism. It is not a neutral broker, but rather one means by which capitalism enforces its rule on the world. It perverts not only the priorities of

domestic governments, but also trade between peoples to the detriment of all. Its negative impact goes far beyond predatory lending, affecting the basics of life itself.

Even Bill Clinton acknowledged this in October 2008: "We need the World Bank, the IMF, all the big foundations, and all the governments to admit that, for 30 years, we all blew it, including me when I was President. We were wrong to believe that food was like some other product in international trade, and we all have to go back to a more responsible and sustainable form of agriculture."

The history of the IMF is clear. It rides roughshod over the democratic wishes of entire peoples, and its policies serve only to damage the weakest in society. It is a tool of the rich and powerful, and the enemy of the working class, in Ireland and across the globe.



Making our resources work for us

How can we pay for the necessary stimulus package for the Irish economy? Part of the answer lies under our feet and off the west coast where our natural resources remain either untapped or have been given away for little or nothing to multinational energy companies, explains Ted Tynan.

Official government figures from 2008 estimate that at least 10 billion barrels of oil lie off the west coast of Ireland, with potentially up to 130 billion barrels, and in the region of 50 trillion cubic feet of gas.

The Dunquin Field, off the coast of Kerry, is estimated to hold 4,130 million barrels of oil and 25 trillion cubic feet of gas. Again quoting government findings, this find, on its own, would more than meet Ireland's domestic oil and gas needs for the next 62 years.

The Dunquin field is being developed by the giant US oil and gas corporation Exxon Mobil which in its previous incarnation was responsible for the world's worst environmental disaster when the Exxon Valdez, went ashore off the coast of Alaska in 1989, spilling over 40 million litres of crude oil into the sea devastating the coastline.

There are also huge deposits of gas off the coast of County Clare while inland there are proven oil and gas reserves under the Bog of Allen in the north midlands. Coupled with these finds Ireland also has massive mineral

wealth in the form of zinc, lead, gold and other minerals. Then there is the Corrib Gas Field, estimated to hold up to €140 Billion worth of gas.

The Irish state though will charge no royalties if and when Shell, Marathon and the Norwegian state oil and gas company, Statoil, start bringing gas onshore, rather they will be charging a mere 25 per cent tax on profits. With profit margins ably to be greatly manipulated so that much less is declared that should be the state will likely receive very little from what should be a major revenue source.

In the 1970s the research section of the then Official Sinn Féin, later the Workers' Party, produced "the Great Oil and Gas Robbery" which outlined the way that oil and gas exploration rights were given out to multinationals and native speculators for practically free. In the three decades that have passed since that pamphlet was produced the extent of Ireland's oil and gas resources has been found to be vastly greater than was thought at the time but the elite's failure to exploit them for the state has not changed.

Our people have been robbed by shady deals done between corrupt politicians, speculators, bankers and bureaucrats. The deal done by Ray Burke as Minister for Industry and Commerce when he signed the contract to agreement to give away the Corrib Gas field to Shell and its cohorts was a crime against the people of this country. This was a deal done by a man subsequently convicted and jailed for involvement in corruption. It was theft on a grand scale from the Irish people and we should not honour such a deal.

A State Energy Company must be established. The basis of this already exists in the ESB, Bord Gáis and Bord na Mona. If Norway and Venezuela can harness their countries' respective natural resources then there is nothing to stop Ireland doing it other than the reluctance / resistance of the establishment. As have other states that have thrown off the control of corrupt elite have done the Irish people must negotiate out, or allowed to expire without renewal, all existing agreements with multi-national corporations concerning our natural resources.

THE REAL ECONO

What To Do Now

In the short term what can be done to rescue the southern Irish economy from the death spiral induced by the policies of Fianna Fail, the IMF and EU, Donagh Brennan explores the possibilities.

One could be forgiven for being mesmerized by the drama that has unfolded in relation to the Republic's economy over the last number of months. A state, a former poster-boy of the Euro-zone, brought to its knees and forced to watch as its 'hard-won' sovereignty gets dashed on the rocks of European fiscal union. What balderdash!

Amidst all the hollering Ireland was portrayed as the victim of events on the wider stage – where its own punitive efforts were over-taken by forces unleashed by the structural imbalances at the heart of the single currency. However, the fact remains that despite these events Ireland had brought much of its current problems on itself through the twin vices of the Fianna Fail/Green government's September 2008 blanket bank guarantee and early introduction of an austerity programme of state spending cutbacks.

That such policies had the approval of the EU and the IMF does not suggest they were part of a grand scheme, elaborately constructed elsewhere to speed up neoliberal 'reforms'. This is happening anyway because the neoliberal policies that have brought about the economic problems are also being used to resolve it.

The stop gap IMF/EU/ECB deal itself is widely understood to be insufficient to prevent a sovereign default. The majority of the money allocated, €35bn, is to provide for future losses in Irish banks – this in turn is there to prevent the need to restructure the debt owed to German and French banks. Some international economists say the fund needs to be made larger. But the argument for default has gone mainstream, as even conservative commentators, such as Benn Steil and Paul Swartz, are calling for restructuring or 'default'.

Such a restructuring, however, would require those governments to recapitalize their banks for a second time, which in the context of Germany's policy to restrain real wage growth to maintain high exports would be politically unpopular, affecting their reelection prospects.

But it's clear, Ireland's experiment



Graffiti on a Dublin wall

with austerity has been an absolute failure. In the weeks prior to the 2011 budget on December 7th the government announced a four year budgetary adjustment of €15bn, of which 6bn will be "front-loaded" this year. This means that €20bn has been taken out of the economy since 2008 once we add the previous €14bn removed in previous austerity budgets. This is the equivalent to 13.1 per cent of GDP and compares to the 9.2 per cent reduction of the UK's GDP as a result of the draconian €9bn in cuts in the latest UK budget with a further £41bn earmarked for this year.

This removal of €20bn out of the economy was the government's reaction to the €19bn slump in investment between 2007 and 2009 which led to a total decline in GDP of €20.3bn. Private consumption also fell by €8.1bn in that period. The over reliance on tax receipts from indirect taxation on consumption also led to a reduction in the tax take. The decision to deal with this by cutting back on government spending has led to a widening of the deficit, not its reduction. But this effect is widely known.

A recent IMF report, "Will It Hurt? The Macroeconomic Effects of Fiscal Consolidation" showed that cuts imposed on an economy that is unable to reduce interest rates (in Ireland they are actually increasing as banks pass the cost of a deteriorating capital base through falling asset values on to their customers) and where budget cuts are occurring simultaneously elsewhere have far greater negative effects on growth.

As the economist Michael Burke explains,

"...the response to a fiscal tightening equivalent to 1 per cent of GDP lowers GDP by 2 per cent in the first year alone. Cumulatively, the IMF research shows that over 5 years the lost output is approximately 6 per cent of GDP. Any shock which lowers output by 6 per cent will of course negatively impact government finances, by far greater than the initial 1 per cent 'saving'. This is precisely what has happened – spending cuts have led to a wider deficit."

However, the effect also goes in the other direction. Increased government spending has a positive effect in the wider economy. A €3bn euro investment in infrastructure, health and education, using the IMF estimates mentioned earlier, would have a €6bn positive impact in the following year and provide a cumulative boost of approximately €18bn. Other calculations of multipliers indicate similar effects.

But is it possible to change course now that the IMF memorandum of understanding has been endorsed by the Dail and we are subject to such regular reporting to them? The answer is yes, and this because following the IMF loan program will be a disaster for the Irish economy. As the economist Tom O'Connor argues, the consequence of the IMF endorsed plan is that by 2014 our debt will be 100 per cent of GDP and the amount of taxes going to service the interest on the national debt will be 20 per cent. But five years later, our debt will be 129 per cent of GDP and in the meantime emigration and unemployment will stay high.

The 'export-led' recovery strategy, despite recent increases in exports, is dominated by foreign multinationals (there is 90-10 ratio of Foreign Direct Investment to domestically-produced exports, with very little of the former feeding into the domestic economy) provide only 10 per cent of the workforce and numbers employed in these sectors have been falling. Any strategy based on

this alone will provide a “jobless” recovery. And it is jobs that are needed. End of story.

Tom O'Connor suggests that we need to provide these by using the remaining cash reserves to pay for the deficit and investment in the economy. He also calls for a partial EU loan without conditions over 20 years. Another economist, Yanis Varoufakis, looks at the wider EU solution too, without which a fix is not possible. He argues that “life has proved that neither the capital flows nor wage reductions are large enough to avert the ever-growing imbalances between deficit and

surplus Eurozone countries”.

His modest proposal therefore advocates a three step approach involving a deal brokered by the EU Commission, the ECB, the European banks who hold so much of the debt owed by peripheral states and those indebted states themselves. Then

1. Transfer a tranche of around 60 per cent of the sovereign debt of all member states to EU bonds.

2. Empower the European Investment Bank to fund a pan-European, large-scale, eco-social investment-led program to serve

as a permanent counterforce to the forces of recession, especially in peripheries.

3. Put in place mechanisms that enforce fiscal discipline among Eurozone member states, banning all attempts to use one member's tax system to undermine another member's investment policy.

Of course, something like this is what should be done. How bad to things have to get before the EU realizes that?

Donagh Brennan is editor of the Irish Left Review website

Irish Trade Unions under Social Partnership: A Faustian Bargain?

As part of LookLeft's continuing series on future strategies for the Irish trade union movement, Daryl D'Art states that deals with Fianna Fail and the PDs were deals with the devil that backfired

The decades of partnership, far from facilitating union recognition, has made it more difficult to achieve. Indeed, the obstacles to union recognition are now probably far greater than at any time since the foundation of the state. Why did unions fare so poorly in strengthening union and workplace organisation in the private sector? After all, union engagement in partnership arrangements is man to increase union influence in government policy making.

Certainly many academic commentators emphasised the extent of trade union influence on economic and social issues, this now appears to have been greatly exaggerated. In a recent interview the ICTU general secretary David Begg observed, ‘If we had that much influence we would not have the enduring level of inequality.’ As for domestic social policy, he continued, it is hard to point to any great achievement. Partnership, he concluded, ‘gave us access but not a lot of influence.’ How can this paradox of partnership that gave the trade unions participation without corresponding power and influence be explained?

Among the reasons is the fact that Irish trade unions do not have a class-based identity compared for example to the Swedish union movement. Consequently they lack the capacity to define their interests in terms of a class based analysis of inequalities.

“Irish trade unions do not have a class based-identity compared for example to the Swedish union movement

Instead, priority is given by unions to economic development, producing an ambiguous attitude towards the capitalist nature of the Irish economy. A reason often advanced for the opposition to union recognition is the importance of foreign direct investment to the Irish economy. Ireland has the highest proportion of foreign direct investment in Europe, mainly from the US. American multinationals prefer to remain non-union and this position has been facilitated by state agencies since the mid-1980s.

The absence of class cleavages in the Irish political system, encourages the development and persistence of political ideologies that deny the presence of social and class divisions. Electoral politics in Ireland has been dominated by Fianna Fail, a populist catch-all party.

It favoured partnership from its inception and traditionally has had many supporters within the unions. This relationship between Fianna Fail and the trade unions has been identified as critical to the partnership process. At the heart of this relationship lay a deep affinity shared by a majority of Congress ICTU unions, with pragmatic solutions rather than ideological ones. Yet for three successive governments Fianna Fail's junior coalition partner, the Progressive Democrats, espoused a typical package of neo-liberal policies that included low social spending, low taxation, deregulation of financial and labour markets and the privatisation of state companies.

Resultant state policy reflected an unusual mix of populism and neo-liberalism characterised by a relatively liberal if limited welfare regime, and accompanied by laissez-faire economic policies. Although the marginalisation or eradication of trade unions is an objective of neo-liberal orthodoxy, the maintenance of partnership ensured that in the Irish case this shifted to a policy of containment at the political level. For example, while there were few cases of union de-recognition nothing effective was conceded on union recognition.

From a union perspective, partnership must now seem a failure. At the outset the union objective in entering partnership talks was purely defensive. The ICTU argued that a negotiated agreement with employers and government would act as a bulwark against the neoliberal policies of deregulation, privatisation and union marginalization. Yet these policies have in large measure been implemented. With private sector unions representing a fifth of the workforce a future partnership process is likely to have little attraction for employers or government. The supposedly ‘dense set of institutions’ identified by commentators at the centre of the partnership process are likely to wither away. For Irish trade unions, partnership may well prove to have been a Faustian bargain.

This article been taken from a Working Paper by Daryl D'Art and Thomas Turner. The complete paper can be seen on the Lookleft website.



The end of Fiann

Historian Brain Hanley outlines how southern Ireland's successful political force has curtailed the development of functioning democratic politics but he sounds a word of caution to those who maybe premature in celebrating the party's demise.

It is vital that the Free State be shaken at the next general election, for if an opportunity is given to it to consolidate itself further as an institution-if the present Free State members are replaced by Farmers and Labourers and other class interests, the national interest as a whole will be submerged in the clashing of rival economic groups. It seems to be a case of now or never-at least in our time.'

Eamon de Valera to Joseph McGarrity, 1926.

Fianna Fáil was founded in May 1926 by members and ex-members of the defeated Anti-Treaty republican movement. By 1932 it was in power and has been the dominant political force in southern Ireland since then.

For most of its existence, Fianna Fáil has been adept at winning support from across class boundaries: gaining votes from building workers and money from property developers; maintaining strong relationships with unions and employers; and presenting itself as a national movement, the 'Republican Party' somehow above class divisions. The above quote from de Valera illustrates how aware key figures in early Fianna Fáil were that independent class politics could hinder their political project.

But they were also aware of the potential support that appealing to those seeking social and economic change might bring. De Valera quoted James Connolly extensively at Fianna Fáil's inaugural rally and his party spoke of making 'the resources and wealth of Ireland... subservient to the needs and welfare of the people.' There were promises to break up large grazing ranges and distribute land to the

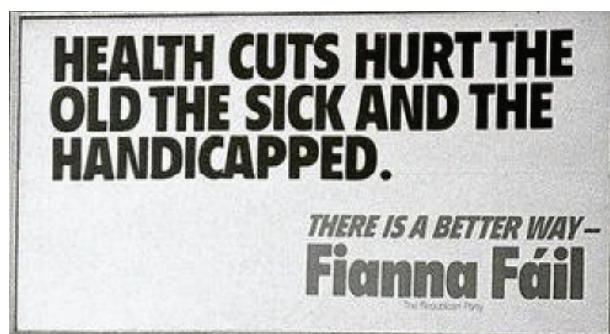
small farmers and labourers, institute a minimum wage and regulate conditions of employment.

While the radicalism of early Fianna Fáil can be overstated (and it certainly was not the 'Bolshevism' of which it was accused) the party was far to the left of the prevailing Free State orthodoxy. Once in power Fianna Fáil consolidated support among urban and rural workers, carrying through a house building programme (132,000 new houses between 1932-1942), improving social welfare and setting up state and semi-state companies that helped the numbers in industrial employment rise from 161,000 in 1931 to 217,000 in 1938.

Co-operation was sought from the unions through Joint Industrial Councils. But despite its occasional claims, Fianna Fáil was not attempting to be some sort of 'labour' party. It was aiming to achieve the old Sinn Féin goal of economic self-sufficiency by ending dependence on Britain and developing a native Irish capitalism. This meant clashing to some extent with large farming and banking interests, tied economically and sometimes ideologically, to Britain. But in doing this Fianna Fáil eschewed the language of class conflict as 'foreign' and embraced a 'republican' rhetoric that promoted the ideals of the nation above all else.

The party stood for the 'common man' but that man could be a merchant or builder, as well as a labourer or small farmer. By the 1930s increasing numbers of Irish businessmen were turning to Fianna Fáil. While the early Fianna Fáil had faced suspicion from the Catholic Church by the late 1930s not only had peace been made there, but for many in the party the Irish nation and Catholicism were indivisible. This in part reflected the personal religiosity of de Valera and

others, but it was also a useful structure for social control. This was to prove helpful when social peace was threatened, as it was for a period in the 1940s by labour militancy: concerted 'red scares' helped split the trade union movement in 1944, aided by the support for Fianna Fáil of important union leaders.



Pic credit Irishelectionliterature.wordpress.com

But in the longer run protectionism failed: indigenous Irish capital proved incapable of developing the economy and by the 1950s de Valera's dream was practically dead, as the young packed their bags and headed for refuge in the cities of Britain. Under Seán Lemass Fianna Fáil embraced multi-national development and foreign investment, and a new generation of Irish businessmen began to prosper.

Some locate the corruption of Fianna Fáil in this era of TACA, the 'men in the Mohair suits' and the new arrogance of Haughey. Lenihan and their ilk. TACA ('support') was created in 1966 to cultivate financial support from businessmen for Fianna Fáil. Many of the new generation of property developers and land speculators were prominent in its ranks. Part of Fianna Fáil's attraction for these people, and their successors, lies in its position as THE party of power (in government since 1932, give or take a few years), hence attracting

Fianna Fáil?

Ireland's most
development of
a word

those seeking power and access to power. How many of the Galway Tent set genuinely yearned for de Valera's vision of Ireland? Certainly there was a cultural shift in Fianna Fáil's ethos in the 1960s, but the party was not deserting some original halycon era of radicalism. And despite TACA and recurring hints of deeper corruption in land and business, Fianna Fáil still retained working class support. It was to the strains of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union band playing A Nation Once Again that Charles Haughey mounted the podium at his first Ard Fheis as party leader. And after numerous battles with a Fine Gael-Labour coalition it was with the newly fiscally-rectitude Fianna Fáil that the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) embarked on social partnership in 1987.

Even before the present crisis much had happened to weaken Fianna Fáil. It has not governed as a single party since 1989. Its image as a party of the people has been tarnished by recurring scandals since the 1990s. 'Golden Circles', Charvet shirts, Beef Tribunals, corruption and backhanders come to mind more readily than de Valera when Fianna Fáil is mentioned now.

The party's rhetoric about republicanism and independence looks empty when confronted with the reality of EU/IMF 'bailouts.' The scale of the crisis since 2008, the bailout of the banks and the biased austerity programme do offer an opportunity to inflict an historic defeat to Fianna Fáil. But such a defeat is not inevitable.

For the broad left an honest appraisal of the history of the unions and Fianna Fáil is necessary. It is clear that the ICTU's response to the current crisis has been affected by the long-time close relationship between union leaders and Fianna Fáil. The ICTU simply find it much easier to do business with Fianna Fáil. Union leaders will claim that they have been able to deliver gains for their members by this relationship, but it has helped block independent working class

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It was to the strains of the ITGWU band playing A Nation Once Again that Charles Haughey mounted the podium at his first Ard Fheis as party leader.



politics. Despite essentially being the Irish establishment, the party of big money, Fianna Fáil are still able to claim to be outsiders, being victimised by RTE, the Irish Times and 'Dublin 4'. While the left might scream at 'Ireland's Tories', no British Tory would ever claim to be any sort of a 'socialist'.

One reason why Fianna Fáil's populism has worked is that often the left's critique of the party has left it open to charges of elitism and snobbery: sneering at Bertie Ahern's accent or opposing Fianna Fáil for what seems to be cultural rather than political reasons.

In 1986, during the last recession, with an unpopular Coalition government implementing cuts, Bertie Ahern was asked in an interview about his attitude to social welfare fraud. He replied that he could not condemn a tradesman, trying to feed a family, who blostered his dole with a few hours' work. Until corruption in big business was tackled, he suggested, welfare fraud would be a fairly minor issue.

Hypocritical and opportunistic? Certainly, but also very effective politics. It is a feature of populist parties that they are adept at using the real worries and fears of working people and turning them into resentment at 'elitist' critics, who are perceived as caring more about vague notions of 'fairness' than the reality of working people's lives.

Under a new coalition implementing essentially the same austerity programme, who would bet against Fianna Fáil once again claiming that 'health cuts hurt the old, the sick and the handicapped'? The left should not to give them this opportunity, because if history teaches us anything it is when these parties are wounded that they become most dangerous.

Welcome to
Fianna Fáil
Country



THE ZAPATISTAS 17 YEARS OF REBELLION

By Andrew Flood

In the remote Chiapas area of Mexico a social experiment in constructing a society based on the values of direct democracy has seen a generation experience socialism in action

On the morning of January 1st 1994 a previously unheard of armed group in the state of Chiapas, South East Mexico, seized control of seven town and cities, freeing prisoners from jails and setting fire to police stations. This was the EZLN or Zapatista Army of National Liberation (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional), the military wing of what came to be referred to as the Zapatistas.

By the standards of South and Central America the rebellion was a minor, short-lived and small-scale conflict, the fighting was over within 12 days. But what marked the Zapatistas out was not their use of arms but the politics behind the rising, the large scale and long lived experiment in direct democracy that followed and perhaps most importantly, the huge influence they were to have on the emerging summit protest left, over the decade that followed.

The Zapatistas themselves were

comparatively dismissive of the military aspect of their struggle. Their spokesperson Subcomandante Marcos said: "We don't see armed struggle in the classic sense of previous guerrilla wars, that is as the only way and the only all-powerful truth around which everything is organized. In a war, the decisive thing is not the military confrontation but the politics at stake in the confrontation. We didn't go to war to kill or be killed. We went to war in order to be heard."

In a 1995 letter to the Mexican and international left, Marcos explained: "It is not our arms which make us radical; it is the new political practice which we propose and in which we are immersed with thousands of men and women in Mexico and the world: the construction of a political practice which does not seek the taking of power but the organization of society."

And heard they were, within a couple of years the Zapatistas were hosting an international conference

of the left in their jungle headquarters attended by delegates from 44 countries, including Ireland. An Irish solidarity group had formed in 1995 whose activists were not only involved in the Irish Mexico Group's 'peace camp' in the village of Diez de Abril but also in the founding steps of the summit protest movement here. This was a process that started at that international conference, as one of the two that attended I was later to meet others who were present on the streets of Prague during the September 2000 riot that drove the IMF conference out of town and was one of the lead organisers of the Dublin Mayday 2004 EU summit protests.

The 'peace camp' was actually located in the house of a large landholder who had been driven out by the rebellion and whose lands were now occupied by the newly-formed Zapatista village of '10th of April.' On a visit there in 2007 one of the local Zapatista delegates explained



to me how “We used to meet where the church is now, and there decided where to put the houses, and to give a house to the international observers. We measured the land and divided it up among the people. Each family has a plot of land of their own and then there are also collective [plots].”

This constructive work is the other key feature of the Zapatista rebellion. Far from waiting for a new government or land reform the rank and file of the Zapatista movement had taken co-ordinated direct action across the 32 municipalities where the rebellion had taken hold and seized the land they were previously forced to work for pitiful wages. In both new and existing communities programs of popular education replaced the often almost non-existent state education and co-ops were created to displace the middle men who had previously preyed on the communities. These Mexican equivalents of the Gombeen man were known by the highly descriptive term ‘Coyotes’.

In Diez there was a weekly assembly of all the community in the church where all the issues of the running of that community and any problems that arose were discussed and decided on. This was a pattern repeated in similar forms in every one of the hundreds of communities in the rebel area. This meeting selected delegates who went to meetings of the region, in 1994 Marcos had described how this worked as follows:

“In any moment, if you hold a position in the community .. the community can remove you. There isn’t a fixed term that you have to complete. The moment that the community begins to see that you are failing in your duties, that you are having problems, they sit you down in front of the community and they begin to tell you what you have done wrong. You defend yourself and finally the community, the collective, the majority decides what they are going to do with you. Eventually, you will have to leave your position and another will take up your responsibilities.”

The big political and strategic decisions like that not to sign a peace agreement with the government in 2004 were made not through this delegate process and not even through referendum but through a Consulta, essentially an amalgamation of votes from every assembly in every community with the vote only happening after long discussion. A Zapatista commune explained this process as follows:

“The study, analysis, and discussion of the peace accords took place in democratic assemblies. The voting was direct, free, and democratic. After the voting, official reports of the results of the as-



semblies were prepared. These reports specify: the date and place of the assembly, the number of people who attended (men, women and children older than 12 years old), opinions and principal points discussed, and the number of people who voted.”

The Irish Mexico Group and other international activists observed these consultas in progress in various communities, our observations generally confirming this description but it also struck us what a very different way of doing things this was to that of the secretive and top down Irish ‘Peace Process’ we witnessed at home.

The major limitation the Zapatistas faced was the Mayan communities they organised who were composed of excluded, impoverished subsistence farmers lacking both economic power and political clout. The mountains and jungles of Chiapas although rich in resources are isolated from the rest of Mexico by geography, poverty and language. In the Irish context we have seen how the state can isolate the resistance of a small community in North West Mayo, the indigenous rebellion in Chiapas found itself considerably more excluded than this.

When the deeply unpopular Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) government tried to use large-scale military force to crush the movement in 1995, the Zapatistas retreated and Mexican civil society mobilised on a massive scale in their defence, triggering a currency crisis and forcing a ceasefire. The period from ’95 to the removal of the PRI from power for the first time in 70 years in 2000 saw the Zapatistas build links with many other struggles in Mexico but the election of the new government in 2000 saw a general dampening down of struggle.

In Chiapas the army had switched to classic low-intensity warfare through arming right-wing paramilitaries to carry out attacks on Zapatista communities on the one hand, while on the other the government offered financial incentives to both communities and individuals who abandoned the Zapatistas. A shift in allegiance was often marked by shiny new corrugated iron roofs on the peasant shacks.

Today, quite remarkably, the Zapatistas continue to survive as a movement controlling a large swathe of Chiapas, probably around 150,000 people in around 1,300 communities that continue to build an infrastructure of education, health clinics and co-ops independent of the state. Much of the funding comes from the coffee co-ops which produce and sell organic Zapatista branded coffee. They remain isolated but Mexico is a powder keg due to the extreme division between wealth and poverty it contains both internally and due to the US border so the Zapatistas remain placed to break out of that isolation with the next wave of popular struggle.

A whole generation has now grown up in free Zapatista communities, a generation that the EZLN described in 2005 as:

“Those who were children in that January of ’94 are now young people who have grown up in the resistance, and they have been trained in the rebel dignity lifted up by their elders throughout these 12 years of war. These young people have a political, technical and cultural training that we who began the Zapatista movement did not have.”

Further information can be seen in the The Irish Mexico Group archive at <http://struggle.ws/mexico.html>



The Art of History

Kevin Squires takes a look at how graphic novels are being used to bring a refreshing new look to history writing

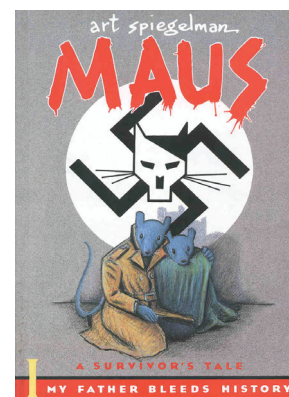
Many people still stereotypically consider comics to be for “kids and teenagers”. However, today there is no escaping this fact: comics are big business. A slew of Hollywood films based on comics have led to the medium’s repopularisation – while the humble comic has progressed vastly since the early days of characters like Spiderman and Batman. In the late 1970s and 80s there was a revolution as comics like 2000AD, RAW and Warrior introduced intelligent, controversial writers like Alan Moore to the world. The underground became more mainstream, gone were the Boy’s Own style adventuring and all-American heroes, replaced by altogether darker themes and characters. If Moore’s Watchmen (1986-87) and V For Vendetta (1982-89) – both now mediocre films – proved that comics could ‘do’ serious and thoughtful fiction, then the Pulitzer-winning Maus proved that comics could tackle important issues of non-fiction too – in Maus’ case, the darkest episode of 20th Century history, the Holocaust. Below I review some of the best graphic non-fiction available today.

Maus: A Survivors Tale (1977-91) – Art Spiegelman

Maus is the story of Spiegelman’s father Vladek’s Holocaust survival, and also of Spiegelman’s strained relationship with his father as he interviews him about his experiences. Vladek was a Polish Jew and Maus follows his story fighting in the Polish army, escaping deportation and living on the run, eventual capture and his survival of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp. Interwoven into the Holocaust narrative are snapshots of Vladek’s contemporary life in American suburbia where we see the psychological effects the Holocaust has left on his family; his first wife’s suicide, second loveless marriage and tense relationship with his son.

A truly harrowing work, it is also brilliant, standing out among reams of Holocaust literature – original in concept, human and complex in narrative (Vladek is no hero, he just resourcefully does what he must to survive) and steers away from cynical “Holocaust exploitation”. The artwork – minimalist, monochrome and bleak – works perfectly, while the portrayal of Jews as mice, Germans as cats etcetera was meant, Spiegelman says, to “self-destruct” the idea of Nazi racial divisions.

Of course, graphic non-fiction existed before Maus, but there is little doubt that this work ensured comics were viewed as legitimate a medium for non-fiction as literature and film. Indeed, as one review said, Maus is a work that would be “impossible to achieve in any medium but comics”.



Che: A Graphic Biography (2008) – Spain Rodriguez

Che Guevara’s iconic image is an ever-present feature of life, adorning everything from t-shirts to beermats as capitalism continues to commodify the “revolutionary chic” of this unyielding fighter for socialism. As Lenin said, great revolutionaries are hounded by the ruling classes during their lifetimes, and converted into harmless idealistic icons upon their deaths. Rodriguez’s book is a conscious antidote to this tendency, using the visual medium to recontextualise Che’s image, life and ideas. On a short, exciting journey through Che’s equally brief and eventful life, Rodriguez takes us from his birth and travels in Latin America – which would have a politically formative effect on him as he experienced the 1954 CIA coup in Guatemala – to his first meeting with Fidel Castro. We then explore his leading role in the Cuban Revolution, both as a commander and later as he dealt with post-revolutionary and geopolitical realities, and finally his futile militant activities in Congo and untimely death, aged 39, at the hands of the CIA in Bolivia.

Thankfully this is not one man’s wild and romantic adventure story, Rodriguez is careful to place Che in the context of his era; social and political struggles against economic realities are not ignored in pursuit of some ‘great man’ theory of history. This Che will be familiar to those who have read J.L. Anderson’s biography – Che is not presented as an infallible secular saint, he is a man who makes mistakes in pursuit of a better future for humanity. Hopefully those picking up this comic and knowing little beyond the iconography will develop an understanding of this socialist fighter who believed in, fought and died for the unity of all oppressed peoples – something as necessary today as in Che’s lifetime.

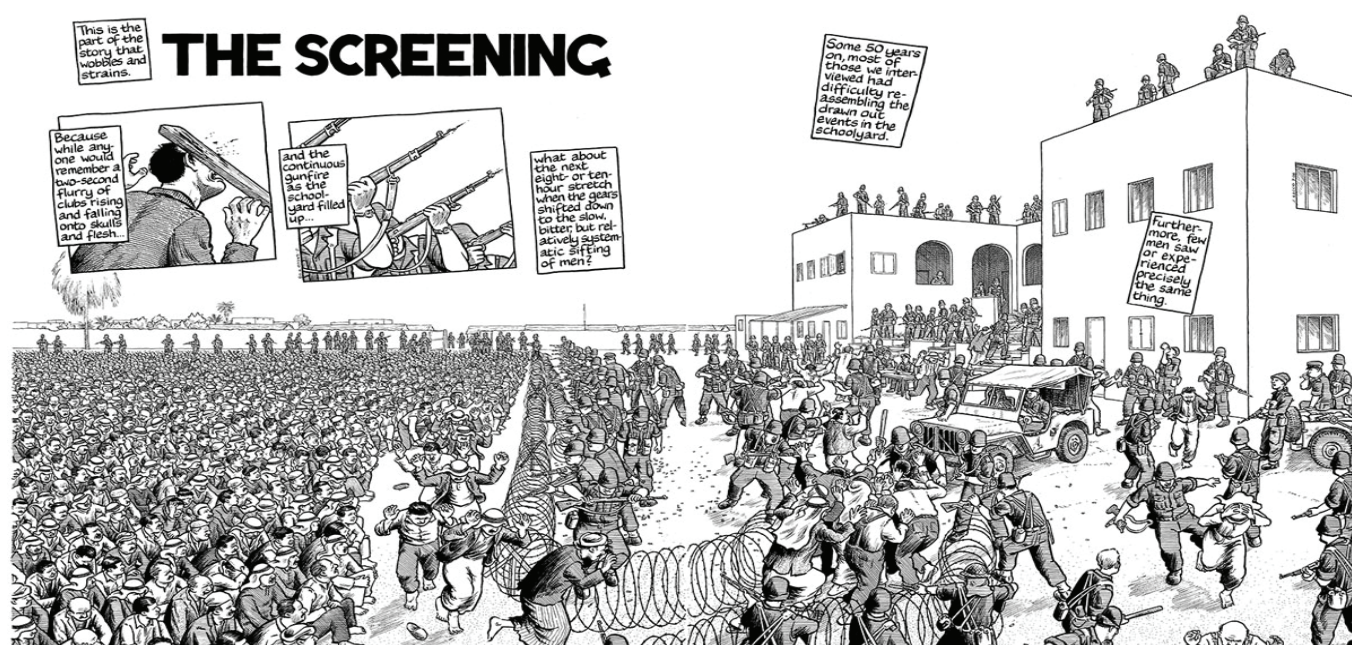


Palestine (1993-95) and Footnotes in Gaza (2009) – Joe Sacco

Sacco is a Maltese-American ‘graphic journalist’ – he travels to conflict zones and illustrates (visually and verbally) his experiences, the people he meets and their stories. Sacco first travelled to Palestine in 1991/92 during the dying days of the first intifada, and Palestine is a chronicle of this era. Sacco presents us with ordinary people’s everyday stories and oral histories, giving us entwined narratives that both reflect then-contemporary events and outline the broader historical injustices – 1948: expulsions of 700,000+ Palestinians to facilitate the founding of Israel, 1967: occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, 1987: outbreak of the intifada etc – that have resulted in Palestinians’ woeful situation. Above all, unlike many dry texts I’ve read, Sacco achieves the humanisation of Palestinians – they are not statistics or pawns, they are people and – agree or disagree – have valid things to say. In telling this story, Sacco is knowledgeable, self-deprecating, humorous and critical. Sacco’s artwork is amazing and has an unparalleled ability to convey emotion. That this is an illustrated work gives it added potency as he can draw what would be unavailable to a photographer and descriptively unwieldy for a writer – eg, Israeli torture and sensory deprivation methods.

Footnotes in Gaza sees Sacco return to Palestine to investigate the story of two overlooked Israeli massacres in Gaza during the 1956 Suez Crisis. UN reports say Israeli forces killed 275 civilians in Khan Younis and 111 in Rafah in acts Sacco describes as “airbrushed from history”. As with Palestine, there are two narratives – the contemporary set against backdrop of the second intifada in 2003 as he searches for stories, and the historical as he unlocks people’s memories.

Both Palestine and Footnotes are fantastic, if ultimately human stories and therefore subject to human error. For me they are better introductions to Palestine than many history books – indeed I would argue that Palestine is one of the greatest works about the region in any medium.



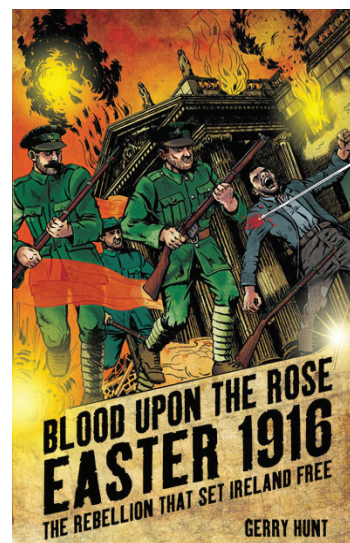
Blood Upon The Rose: Easter 1916 (2010) – Gerry Hunt

The best that can be said about this work is that it is unique; it is basically an Irish Boy’s Own comic – which for someone who grew up reading English and US war stories was an interesting experience. Unfortunately, for an adult this is a major failing – Hunt’s version of 1916 is pure militaria, lacking in socio-historical context, interesting characters (and given those involved in 1916 that in itself is an unenviable achievement) or engaging dialogue. It simply bumbles along from one shootout to the next.

From an historical point of view, the story is accurate. However, making history interesting depends greatly on an author’s storytelling skill – a good writer can make even the most boring subject engaging. A major failing of this work is that it’s very much a history of the 1916 Rising as a military event; we begin on Easter Sunday and end with the execution of the Rising’s leaders. It lacks historical context – what are the motivations of those involved? What is the historical, social and economic background? How did such an “unlikely band of freedom fighters”, as Hunt calls them, get to this point? What did they realistically hope to achieve?

Instead, we are presented only with the decontextualised brave rebel leaders and volunteers of bourgeois republican myth, who fight and die for “dear old Ireland”. The dialogue rarely raises itself above the level of a 1980s British war comic, indeed if the British were German they would be screaming “Achtung! Achtung!” and “Gott in Himmel!” However, the main failing of this work is that it is just not engaging – perhaps because it just flits from firefight to firefight, one doesn’t build a relationship with the rebels. I think the author recognises this, and bookends the main story with Plunkett’s death-bed marriage in a failed attempt to give it some human context – but given how little we see of Plunkett in the story it feels crowbarred in. It is not impossible to weave an ‘ensemble piece’ in graphic format, but perhaps this would have fared better had it focused only one or two of the leaders or volunteers and showed us the Rising from their unique perspectives.

Undoubtedly there is a gripping comic to be written about the Irish Revolution. This, alas, is not it.





The European Union and the Israeli occupation of Palestine

David Cronin, the author of a new book *Europe's Alliance With Israel: Aiding the Occupation* talks to Kevin Squires

In his new book, Irish journalist David Cronin shows that despite occasional mealy-mouthed statements criticising human rights abuses, the EU and its member states facilitate the occupation of Palestine by an Israeli government that systematically violates human rights.

Cronin traces the development of the EU's ties with Israel and explains how and why these partnerships function, and exposes the rank hypocrisy underpinning this relationship. The EU states claim to uphold international law, but ignore Israel's actions in Gaza. The book is an accessible - if depressing - guide to a subject that is under-reported. LookLeft interviewed David at the book's Irish launch.

LL: Among other things, your book is a litany of EU hypocrisy with regard to Israeli human rights abuses. What do you think are some of the most egregious examples of this?

DC: I would go further - the EU is not merely hypocritical, it's actually complicit in crimes against the Palestinian people.

EU-Israeli relations are covered by an "association agreement" which contains a legal clause stating that both must respect human rights. Despite Israel's refusal to abide by that commitment, the EU has happily deepened its cooperation. For example in 2008, despite increased illegal settlement building, the EU "upgraded" relations with Israel, granting it many economic benefits.

"Scientific research" is an extremely lucrative form of Israeli cooperation with the EU. Israel takes part in over 800 schemes with European universities and companies, with a total value of €4.3 billion. By 2013, it's expected that Israel will have received more than €500 million worth of EU grants. People should be outraged that Ireland's European Commission representative, Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, is administering these grants. Among the beneficiaries are arms-makers like Elbit and IAI, who produce the pilotless drones and warplanes regularly used in attacking the people of Gaza.

LL: The EU continues to ignore human rights abuses in pursuit of Israeli 'integration' into the EU. Is this for military, economic or ideological rea-

sons, a Holocaust guilt hangover - or a mixture?

DC: A mixture, I would say. The Holocaust left an indelibly shameful stain on Europe's history. But it's a gross insult to Holocaust victims to allow them - metaphorically speaking - be exhumed and abused as part of a sordid propaganda war.

Israel has also presented itself as indispensable in the "war on terror". Israel's economy is increasingly reliant on the euphemistically titled "security" industry, exporting weapons and technology that have been "battle-tested" against Palestinians. The EU has warmly embraced these merchants of death, even involving some of them in the EU-Israel business forum, where CEOs brainstorm on trade cooperation.

LL: You argue that once the EU continues to embrace and reward Israel, peace will never be achieved. What do you say to people seeking a just peace?

DC: Simple - get involved with your nearest Palestine solidarity group, get active in the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement. We can't rely on politicians to deliver justice, so it falls to ordinary people to take action.

Review: The Pipe

"We were sent to Connacht by Cromwell, we won't let Shell send us to Hell."

For those 'on the left' during the first decade of the 21st century, Rosspoint, Bellanaboy, Corrib, once nothing more than names of windswept dwellings on the unforgiving Atlantic coast, will be forever remembered as battlegrounds where multi-national corporations, backed up by local 'gombeenism' (literally) fought against the local community.

In his documentary 'The Pipe' director Risteard O' Domhnaill brings those years of struggle to the big screen.

It would be easy to paint 'The Pipe', as an inspiring visual account of a geographically isolated community battling for their livelihoods against the forces of State and international capitalism, the overriding emotions though which I felt upon leaving Temple Bars IFI were ones of exhaustion and depression.

The Pipe chronicles how once tight knit fishing and farming com-

munities are ripped apart as the travelling circus of Shell and its army of Gardai and IRMS security personal sweep like a plague across the Erris peninsula, destroying community camaraderie with a fist full of euros in one hand and a baton in the other.

The cast of characters is diverse and takes in the various phases of the struggle - placard carrying Green Party Politicians at Dail gates, Maura Harrington, the incorruptible former school principal turned hunger striker, the Rosspoint 5, Bertie Ahern proclaiming the 'rule of law' must prevail in Rosspoint over pictures of baton wielding Gardai hurling protestors into ditches, the fisherman Pat O'Donnell who is perhaps the most tragic figure in the production as we watch his faith in the Irish State erode by the minute, before culminating in his arrest at sea for piloting his boat in Shell occupied waters.

Eerily, we also see clips of Mi-

“”
The Pipe
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chael Dwyer, the former IRMS private 'security guard', who would go on to find his tragic end in Bolivia, shot dead, alongside others, by police who believed he had been in the country plotting a right wing coup.

While 'The Pipe' can be criticised for failing to highlight how Shell came to acquire the gas fields - the murky deals between the multi-nationals and Fianna Fail are never explored - it does brilliantly capture those years of energy sapping protest while also capturing a snapshot of Irish rural life.

Unfortunately there's no happy ending, though maybe that's for the sequel...

Documentary Film (83 minutes) - A Scannain Inbhear Teoranta presentation in association with Underground Films, Riverside Television and TG4 - Produced by Rachel Lysaght, Risteard O Domhnaill. Directed by Risteard O Domhnaill. For more information see - www.thepipethefilm.com

Review: Dissent into treason by Fergus Whelan

'The good old cause'

Theobald Wolfe Tone, Henry Joy McCracken, the United Irishmen, the ideology now known as Irish republicanism finds its beginnings with these radicals of the late 18th century. But who came before them? This is the question that Fergus Whelan answers in his totally engaging account of Irish dissenter radicalism that spans from the Cromwellian invasion to Robert Emmet's ill-fated uprising of 1803.

Although Whelan's work starkly reassesses the impact of the 1640s Cromwellian conquest on the course of Irish history there is no attempt to hide the horror of the New Model Army's onslaught; fuelled both by sectarianism and an unshakeable belief that feudal despotism must be ended. It was this later political consideration that Whelan reveals led to the massacre of the citizens of Drogheda, a mainly protestant English speaking town, that had remained loyal to the Stuarts.

But amongst the ranks of the New Model Army were probably the first men – Levellers, Diggers, Quakers and others – to reach Ireland's shores, who held it as an article of faith that society should not be ordered according to persons lineages and that freedom of conscience was a fundamental right.

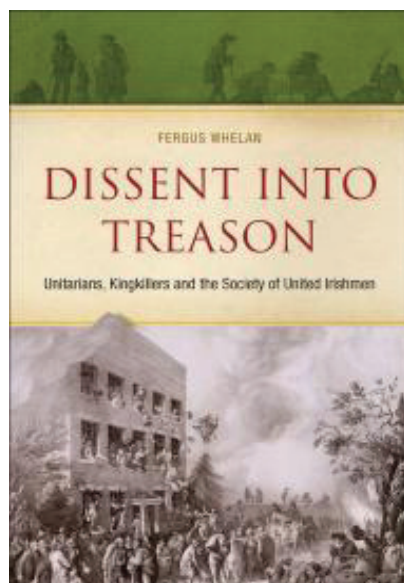
These 'king-killers' would fall out of favour with the restoration of the Stuart dynasty but their beliefs continued on amongst radical dissenter congregations. As their politics developed over the generations so did their religious ideas. The idea of the divine trinity being replaced by the concept of God as a single entity. Whelan's researching of the records of these "Unitarians", held in both Dublin and Belfast, forms much of the basis of the book's revelations.

It was these dissenter communities which would keep the "good old cause" of republican politics alive. The story of these early republicans is linked through the generations to the United Irishmen and their

ill fated rising of 1798, in an easy to follow highly readable manner. Through their story Whelan also explores the impact on Irish history of the British political division between reactionary Tory and progressive Whigs, as well as the American and French revolutions.

It is a tale which returns to the centre of the development of Irish progressive political figures such as freethinker John Toland, revolutionary Archibald Hamilton Rowan and Margaret Kingston.

Dissent into treason is revealing, challenging but above all necessary to anyone who wishes to seriously engage with the ideals of Irish republicanism, rather the reactionary Toryism which has, for some, masqueraded as this essentially progressive ideology.



Dissent into treason
Fergus Whelan
Brandon books

Obituary: Danny McKenna

The socialist-republican cause lost a stalwart in October 2010 with the death of Danny McKenna, a founding member of Clann na hEireann. Danny was born in Lurgan but like many of his generation was forced due to economic necessity to leave his home to find work in England.

A scaffolder by trade he became involved in working class politics in his adopted home of Leeds during the 1960s and was among those activists who established Clann na hEireann as a support group for their comrades in Ireland.

His commitment to the building of a united working class movement saw him focus his energies into trade union activity and his steadfast dedication led to him becoming a leading member of the Leeds Trades Council.

Not one for show, Danny let his actions do the talking and was key to the development of the Workers' Party, as an organiser of supporters in the north of England. Despite health problems in later life he was a regular attendee at party commemorations at Bodinstown and Ardfeiseanna where his commitment was a boon to those keeping the movement going in the face of adversity.

Danny was not one to be fooled by those seeking to use the labour movement not for the benefit of the working class but other ends, and this saw him steadfastly oppose the so-called 'new Labour' project as Thatcherism in another guise. A true working class hero he will be sadly missed by his family, comrades in the Workers' Party and all those sincerely committed to the creation of an untied working class movement. Sean Garland

Education key to combating drugs

Tom Crilly

There are estimated to be over 17,000 heroin users in the Dublin region, with many more young people now caught up in with other drugs. Some, such as so-called "Snowblow", were legally sold through "head shops" up until recently and are now available on the street corner.

The popular response to the drug problem is always "more Gardai, more prisons and tougher sentences" – but there are other approaches as well that don't get the same political and media attention, such as "treatment" and "drug awareness".

For every heroin user moved on to a treat-

ment programme is one less involved in criminal behaviour – and it costs much less to society. It is deeply unfortunate that government cuts have reduced treatment centre budgets creating longer waiting lists.

However key to assisting our young people with life problems is education.

Whenever the media highlight a major tragedy involving young people, from drink-driving to street violence and bullying to suicide, there follows a call for more education on these issues.

Recent reports have highlighted the failure to provide similar programmes dealing with personal health, relationships and sexuality

at the senior cycle level – Leaving Certificate students. Many studies highlight the lack of drug awareness, life and social skills programmes for these same students.

Pressure is put on teachers, parents and students for academic results.

This is a very vulnerable time for teenagers dealing with their emotional and psychological development – added to the stress for academic success. There is a need for more educational programmes dealing with drug awareness, life and social skills.

Not only is this the right thing to do, but such investment is also the most cost-effective long-term approach to drug problems.



The word according to Mighty Stef the Baptist

The Mighty Stef has long been heralded as one of Ireland's finest emerging troubadours, something his latest album 'TMS & The Baptists' has placed in stone. Here he speaks to Barry Healy.



LookLeft needed no excuse for a chat with Stef before the Newbridge leg of his Irish Tour. We sought sanctuary in the corner of the bar away from the pre-show hustle and bustle. The positive reactions to the record and the numbers braving the snow to make it to his gigs had a genuinely humbling effect on him.

To date his work has been characterised by a fiery folk-punk attitude and a predilection for the darker side of life especially in the early days "I think I was deliberately aiming for the more morose themes" and "there's some pretty dark stuff on the new album, mixed with two or three uplifting tracks".

The album title evokes religious connotations which only manifests themselves dealing with issues of sin and redemption and during songs 'John the Baptist Parts 1 & 2'. Accompanied by a wry smile he explains the thinking, "John the Baptist (Part 1) is almost a tongue in cheek gospel song asking for whomever it is that hands out forgiveness to have mercy on us all, in particular me and the other five lads in the band. I'm not a deeply religious person", preferring instead to keep it simple and "believe in right and wrong". The introduction of his new band 'The Baptists' has pushed him from his comfort zone, making things "slightly different. They didn't let me be nonchalant or lazy as I would normally be".

However, one ever-present ingredient to his work is heart and soul, always a big part but never so fervently as his latest single, 'We Want Blood'. The song, a universal song of disgust at the powers that be is "not so much a call to arms. I'm not a violent person. I'm not even a political person. It's apparent to me that the people responsible for the economic downturn aren't the people who are gonna be held accountable, it will be me, you and all the other good working class people". The song has received many plaudits for how timely it is but he points out that it's always the right time because "these points are always relevant, even in the supposedly good times the government were still a shower of c**ts and the banks were still a shower of greedy bastards, excuse the language." "I wrote this over a year and half ago and it was as relevant then as it is now. It mightn't go far enough in what it's saying."

Music has acted as a catalyst for change in the past but Stef isn't sure if he's "politically savvy enough to write a protest album or anything like that". There's a feeling music can "even by accident, change things. When rock'n roll first hit America, Christian right-wing groups said it was the work of the devil but it changed people's perspectives. When I think of rock'n roll having the power to change things I always think of Bob Dylan or Joe Strummer, neither of whom wanted to be spokespersons for their generation but did by default and they did change

things for a lot of people."

This is his third album to be released via his 'The First Born is Dead' label and being an independent artist is something he's happy with, "I've managed to make a very modest living but the money isn't the important thing to me, its playing music". He points out that it can be "as hard as you make it. If I was to limit myself to gig around Ireland I would force myself into a corner pretty quickly. I try to get outside [Ireland] a bit. I love doing this so much, I would never complain about how difficult it is because it's an absolute privilege and pleasure to do it".

The internet is an intrinsic weapon in his arsenal and he is dismissive of the major labels' and industry heads' attitudes that the internet is killing music. On the contrary it seems to be a great leveller; "it might have spoiled the party for a lot of people who have had it really good for a very long time. If you look down the food chain to the likes of myself, I'd be nowhere without the internet. It allows me to go off on tour, play small venues and for people to be able to find out who I am and interact with people about the music".

In an industry that constantly presents individuals obsessed with fame, self-importance and money but low on talent, to find a musician so honest and full of love for music is a refreshing change.

Carling Nations Cup: Ireland v Wales, a Historic Fixture

Barry Healy

In February Dublin will host the inaugural 'Carling Nations Cup', with Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland all vying for victory.

The tournament is essentially a re-hashed version of the now defunct 'British Home Championship', of course with the notable exception of England from proceedings. The reintroduction of such a competition will be perceived by most as continuing the trend of more improved and settled relations on our own island and with our neighbours.

The tournament kicks off on February 9th with the Republic of Ireland hosting Wales in the newly renovated and glamorous Lansdowne Road. When the battle commences few will be aware that close to one hundred years ago, these two

teams met to make football history in the more modest surroundings of The Racecourse Ground, Wrexham, North Wales.

The 'British Home Championship' game took place at Wrexham on April 2nd 1906 and was captured by two early screen pioneers. The teams were involved in what was, by all accounts, an eventful match watched by up to 6,000 spectators. The game ended 4-4 with the ball burst just before half time and Wales player Arthur William Green, from Aberystwyth, grabbing a hat-trick.

The match was captured on film by Sagar Mitchell and James Kenyon. The silent black-and-white film lasts just two minutes and 10 seconds. It is however the oldest surviving film footage anywhere in the world featuring an international football match and can be found in



the National Screen and Sound Archive of Wales in Aberystwyth.

On 2nd April 2006 a plaque was unveiled at Wrexham's Racecourse ground by then Wales manager, John Toshack, to commemorate the international between Wales and Ireland. The ground is still the proud home of Wrexham Football Club today and the plaque is located on the outside wall of the ground in pride of place, to be viewed by anyone at any time.

Free Music!

A quick selection of legally free albums/EPs available online

Barry Healy

Maverick Sabre – The Travelling Man

Michael Stafford aka Maverick Sabre is a young London-born and Irish-raised musician. He recently released his debut record *Travelling Man* Mixtape, a Grime-fuelled package with fusions of Reggae, Dub Step and Hip Hop. This is a sound that's very true and full of substance and understanding with lyrics delivered in a raspy confident manner, as he deals with everything from heartache to various socio-political issues of urban and sub-urban life today.

Expect to hear much more from this guy in 2011.

<http://mavericksabre.bandcamp.com/>

Nouveaunoise – Panaka EP

Nouveaunoise have emerged as one of the shining lights of

barrygruff.wordpress.com

Ireland's under exposed electronic music scene. They have followed up the release of their excellent debut album *Paraphrase Accolade* in 2010 with a brand new free EP, *Panaka*. The Dublin based duo have come up trumps again, it's slick and infectious, paced but mellow; what Mike Skinner (The Streets) would call "dance music that you can drink tea to".

<http://nouveaunoise.bandcamp.com/album/free-panaka-ep>

Visionair – Autumn EP

Visionair is a side project from Choice Music Prize winner Richie Egan (Jape) and his Redneck Manifesto band mate Niall Byrne. The Dublin duo's four-track EP is a mellow collection of crisp, laid back synth-based electronica. Yet another welcome addition to what has a very strong year for Irish music.

<http://soundcloud.com/vvisionair>

Girl Talk – All Day

Girl Talk (Aka Gregg Gillis) is without doubt one of the world's most talented DJ's. Remarkably Gillis announced out of the blue via Twitter that the follow up to the 2008 mash-up master class *Feed The Animals*, *All Day* would be released for free. It features simply tons of samples from an unfathomable list of different genres, styles and eras as you'd expect.

<http://www.illegal-art.net/all-day/>

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Football on the brink

It's been another embarrassing few months for Irish football with players and clubs again fighting each other through the media and the very existence of clubs on both sides of the border being called into question, Kevin Brannigan reports.

On the pitch, the 2010 season ended on a high with the destination of the league trophy going down to the final night, coupled with the cup final between the two Rovers, Sligo and Shamrock, packing crowds into Lansdowne Road. But there can be no masking the fact that the four-month off-season has helped undo much of the positivity since.

Bohemians have been the story of the off-season. The Phibsborough side, pipped to the post by Shamrock Rovers for the 2010 title, lurched from one crisis to another before the 120-year-old club faced the very real prospect of going the way of Cork City and finding themselves wound up when two players, Brian Shelley and Steven Gray, issued a winding-up petition to the High Court when payments due were not forthcoming.

While the matter seemed clear cut - unpaid workers taking on their bosses - the story soon took on a life of its own when Australian club Ballarat Red Devils claimed Shelley had agreed to sign for them.

When Shelley was then part of a Professional Footballers' Association of Ireland (PFAI) squad which went to play in Norway, with a view to attracting attention from Scandinavian scouts, the players' union's credibility in supporting the duo was called into question.

For Bohemians members, the situation reached farcical levels when the players, represented by PFAI chief Stephen McGuinness, called a press conference to explain their side of the story at FAI headquarters in Abbotstown, which now also houses the players' union offices.

In the end, FAI chief executive John Delaney, seeing a resolution could be reached, stepped in at the 11th hour to intervene, preventing the bizarre spectacle of union members holding a press conference on FAI property calling for an FAI member club to be wound up, jeopardising other union members' livelihoods at the club.

The long, drawn-out case of the Bohemians players looks set to run into the new season as the 2008 and 2009 league champions struggle to adjust to their new circumstances of battling to survive day-to-day.

While Bohs were skirting close to the edge of disaster, further north, 2007 league winners Drogheda United

were also fighting for survival as regular appeals to the local business community to 'bail them out' fell on deaf ears. At the time of going to press, it looks as though Drogheda will survive to the new season, but again, only just.

Elsewhere, property developer and subject of an RTE Prime Time investigation, Nama'd Gerry Gannon, won't be funding council-backed Sporting Fingal if they make it to the start line.

His former plaything, who were originally meant to set up base in north county Dublin, will play in Dalymount Park this, a short walk from O'Connell street and a long walk from Lusk.

But Dalymount is no stranger to dodgy developers - the collapse of Liam Carroll's property empire and his deal to buy the ground has been well-documented.

On the pitch, the two 2010 cup finalists look set to dominate this year. Shamrock Rovers have significantly strengthened their squad

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and will hold onto star striker Gary Twigg, despite publishing end-of-year debts of over €500,000.

A resurgent Derry City will also bring much-needed gate receipts and help break the Dublin dominance.

Staying across the border, Glentoran striker Matty Burrows was unable to beat off competition from Turkey's Hamit Altintop to pick up the FIFA Ballon d'Or Puskas, 'beautiful' goal award for his backheeled strike against Portadown at The Oval.

And his employers showed it's not just clubs under the administration of the FAI who can find themselves in a spot bother as a mystery donor, reported to be Belfast-born comedian Frank Carson, saved the Glens from a HM revenue winding-up order for a tax bill of £465,000.

Unfortunately for Drogheda United, Frank Carson is not believed to be a fan.



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